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## SECOND WIND



By CARL ZUCKMAYER

PLAYS

KREUZWEG

DER FROEHLICHE WEINBERG

SCHINDERHANNES

KATHARINA KNIE

RIVALEN

KAKADU-KAKADA

DER HAUPTMANN VON KOEPENICK

KAT (adaptation of Ernest Hemingway's  
*Farewell to Arms*)

DER SCHELM VON BERGEN

BELLMAN

NOVELS

DIE AFFENHOCHZEIT

EINE LIEBESGESCHICHTE

SALWARE

HERR UEBER LEBEN UND TOD

SHORT STORIES

EIN BAUER AUS DEM TAUNUS

POEMS

DER BAUM

ESSAY

PRO DOMO

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Carl Zuckmayer

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# SECOND WIND

*Translated by* .

ELIZABETH REYNOLDS HAPGOOD

*With an Introduction by*

DOROTHY THOMPSON

WILLIAM SINGH CO. LTD.  
No. 101



GEORGE G. HARRAP & CO. LTD.

LONDON    TORONTO    BOMBAY    SYDNEY

ace no 3981

*First published 1941*  
by GEORGE G. HARRAP & CO. LTD.  
182 High Holborn, London, W.C.1

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*Made in Great Britain. Printed at the St Ann's Press,  
Altrincham, Cheshire*

## *Introduction*

I met Carl Zuckmayer first fifteen years ago. A Viennese friend was in Berlin and dragged me to the opening night of a play. "I have to go," she said. "The author has just married a young *protégé* of mine. The marriage is a dreadful mistake. He's a crazy boy. Some people say he has talent, but I doubt it. They are about to starve. The play will probably be a prodigious flop, but for Litzie's sake I'll have to see it through. So please come along," Litzie was the unfortunate young woman who had just married the "crazy boy." I went along.

We sat in a *loge*. The house was full, with the people one always saw at Berlin first nights. This was in 1925, and the Berlin theatre, following the end of the inflation and the stabilization of the mark, had entered, together with the German Republic, into the era of the seven golden years between the catastrophe of the inflation and the great Depression. These were the brilliant feverish years when Berlin was, in a cultural sense, the capital of the world.

Nowhere on earth was there such a feverish intellectual bloom. These were the days when the German mind was open to every stream of thought from every part of the earth. Every current beat upon Berlin, and nowhere was a released intellectual vitality more evident than in the theatre.

The Berlin theatre in 1925-30 was a world theatre, and its like has existed nowhere since. The world was combed for plays—the contemporary world and the world of the Great Tradition. Shakespeare and Freddie Lonsdale, Goethe and Bernard Shaw, Expressionism and Impressionism, Baroque



pomp and New Realism, competed with each other round every street corner. Everybody's plays were being produced, and the Unter den Linden hotels were full of American, French, and English authors, to say nothing of Czechs, Russians, Hungarians, and what-not, come to see their plays produced, come to see new life breathed into them in Berlin.

These were the years when I, who had never before been interested in the drama, often spent five nights out of seven in the theatre. I was correspondent for the New York *Evening Post*, and would sandwich in a play between filing the first and last news stories. For the Berlin theatre of those days was not entertainment. It was the mirror of life and an artistic experience.

I did not look forward to wasting an evening with a new author who was a "crazy boy" and doubtfully talented. But I loved my friend, accepted her invitation, and so saw the *première* of *Der Froehliche Weinberg*.

*Der Froehliche Weinberg* turned out to be more than a play. It was an orgy. It was an orgy of sunshine, harvest, love, lewdness, tenderness, satire, and gargantuan mirth. The mirth was not intellectual and not wisecracking. It was a mirth that rises from a robust affirmation of life. I missed a quarter of the lines because the actors spoke dialect. It did not matter. I laughed, everybody laughed, the world laughed. For the first but not the last time in my life I felt as though an outburst of German laughter might sweep the world clean. The play was coarse—coarse and clean—all the coarseness scrubbed with the soap of imagination and honesty. I was crazily happy. So was everybody else. For *Der Froehliche Weinberg* dealt with the elementals of life, and dealt directly and not analytically. This is my remembrance of the evening, and it corresponds partially, I see, with Carl Zuckmayer's own report of it in this book.



Afterwards I met both partners of the *mésalliance*. Litzie was sparkingly happy, of course. She looked wonderful. I never knew until I read Carl's book that her dress was borrowed for the evening. She was a tall girl with long, straight legs, grey eyes set very wide apart, tow-blond hair, a turned-up nose, a nice big mouth, and an air of volcanic energy. Her energy, however, was matched by his. The "crazy boy" was twenty-seven or -eight, I presume, and looked younger. He did not look at all like an author or a poet. He looked like a peasant. He had and has thick, curly black hair, a low, broad, stubborn forehead, very blue, very lively eyes, a stocky figure, and an air of enjoying himself hugely.

Three hours before I met him he was an unknown and remarkably impoverished playwright with some good lyrics and a forgotten flop to his credit. But a few moments before I met him he had become famous and inordinately successful. That success went on without mitigation until Adolf Hitler extinguished it.

We moved in two worlds, the Zuckmayers and I—they in the world of the theatre and the German writers, I in the world of the journalists, the foreign colony, the Foreign Office, and the diplomats. But we became friends—friends who met here and there and now and then. Some friendships require little coddling. The bond I had with Carl was laughter. Whenever I think of him I want to laugh. Not that he is funny—though he can be very funny—but that laughter seems part of the essence of him. Our friendship was also anointed with wine. I remember an evening—or rather a night—that he and Litzie (Alicia, I found out only the other day) and Sinclair Lewis and I spent together drinking up a liquid map of the Rhine and Moselle valleys. We began with new moselle ("young, slim, and virginal"), and grew younger and sillier ourselves as the wine grew older and heavier with an increasing



number of stars in Carl's Baedeker. We savoured every vineyard with every bottle; Zuck played Rhineland songs on his guitar as accompaniment, interspersed with songs of his own and joined with rhymed improvisations—in German—by Sinclair Lewis. The latter can always make rhyme of any metre or any style in English as fast as one can think, but the wine gave him the gift of tongues. The long, slim bottles were lined against the wall. I am afraid they indicated a large party, not a foursome.

I remember an evening in London when Carl and I met unexpectedly at a formal dinner-party. I had not seen him for two or three years. Heaven only knows what started us laughing. We went up, with others, to the house roof where there was a garden and a view of the city. We leaned together on a railing, and Zuck began to chuckle and so did I, and then to laugh, and so did I, and then we laughed and laughed and laughed for no reason at all—for no reason at all except, perhaps, that the night was lovely, and the light over London weirdly beautiful, and it was good to be alive, and being alive was some sort of cosmic joke which we had the secret of and the rest did not know. I cannot find any other explanation of this gargantuan common laughter that overtook us. It was not wine this time. We had had very little. And the laughter did not emanate from me. Afterwards I found that he has that effect on many friends.

The Mill, which was the Zuckmayers' house in Henndorf, in Austria, is familiar to me. I saw it last in 1936. I was going to Vienna, and got off the train, quite without anticipation, at Salzburg, just because it was so brilliant a winter day, and the lovely town was sparkling under new-fallen snow, and I wanted to laugh with the Zuckmayers. I drove to the neighbouring village of Henndorf an hour later through a blizzard. There was the lovely old house, snuggling in the snow under



its great roof, with the brook rushing past right under the windows, breaking the ice with its swiftness, and the wind swirling drifts of snow on every sill, and inside the great kitchen full of blue-eyed children with dripping noses and Litzie energetically teaching them Christmas carols. The house had the intoxicating smell that all really good houses have—of old wood and burning wood, of snow melting from good leather boots, and apples and fresh bread. I sat on the bench around the big green-tiled stove, shaped like a beehive, and felt warm on my back and in my heart and again ridiculously and unreasonably happy. We ate *goulash* and black bread and Zuck said, "Do you remember the Pfaelzer?"

Did I remember the Pfaelzer? Six years had passed since the last bottle of Forster Jesuitengarten 1920, but who could forget a wine compounded of honey and ecstasy?

"I have only four bottles left. Let's drink it up."

(Did you guess then, Carl—guess in your bones, if not in your head—that soon the house in Henndorf would be, like the Pfaelzer, gone? Only, as this book shows, nothing is gone that is remembered. Your house is not gone for me, nor ever will be, although some Nazi lives there now. But the children, I wager, do not sing carols in the kitchen, and so it is not the same house as the one on which you closed the door.)

Now in the yellow and scarlet Vermont fall I trudge up the high, rutted hill to the little old Perry farmhouse that snuggles against the hillside above the lake in Barnard. I go up the hill to laugh with my friends the Zuckmayers . . . to laugh with my friends in exile. My dog is there, the ungrateful beast, who follows Zuck as though he were his master and doesn't know he's a foreigner. Maybe Bongo likes to laugh too. Nobody ever rented the Perry house before. Nobody,



you would think, would want it. One has to carry in water from the spring beyond the barn, and trim the wicks of oil-lamps. Heaven knows when it was painted last. But Litzie has moved the cupboard in from the pantry and tacked bright chintz frills along the shelves, put out the best dishes of the late Mrs Perry, stuck candles into old cider *krugs*. The kitchen is the living-room, with an old sofa for a bench along the wall. The house smells of apples and wood fire. I half expect the entrance of a troop of blue-eyed children singing carols. And Zuck says, "I like it here. I feel very much at home here." He grins. "The farmers are just like the farmers in Henndorf. Farmers are the same all over the world. Even their barn dances—the steps are much the same as they were at home. And if they don't understand my English—well, neither did the Henndorf peasants understand my German." We drink beer out of cans, and Zuck picks up his guitar. "Zuck," I say, "sing the *Cognac Voegel*." So he sings.

By what an incredible sequence of events, in this mad century, in this crazy time, is Henndorf on top of Vermont hill and Zuck's dog my dog and our conversation in Zuck's still halting English instead of in my halting German? Of all the Germans I have ever known Carl Zuckmayer is the most German German. How comes it that he is a man in a strange land?

I know German exiles whose habitat seemed naturally Paris or Geneva or London or New York. Cosmopolitans. But Zuckmayer is not cosmopolitan. The cut of his head and his shoulders—his very stance—is German. He is German blood and soil. "Blood and soil." German right out of the ground, right from the roots, German in the grain and in the form, German from the reeking trenches of the Great War, German from the hungry days of the defeat and collapse,



German from the bright days of the Republic's bloom. A German and a patriot.

The biography of Carl Zuckmayer might so easily, I think, have unfolded into the brown-shirted ranks, the new march covering the old ground, this time, so far, triumphantly. *Sieg Heil!* Isn't this the Nazi ideal, full-blooded, robust, affirmative, positive, resistant, drawing strength from the earth? They keep saying it is.

But the Nazis deny the world outside them, except to conquer and rule it. Not Carl. I have come to know that the real world citizen is not the cosmopolitan, rootless and skimming over the superficial similarities in all countries. The world citizen is he who goes down deep enough into his own culture to find the common spring that feeds all cultures. The most German Germans are those with the most universal appeal. The most English Englishmen the same. The most American Americans the same. Be enough of what you are, and you will have meaning for all and all will have meaning for you. Why am I astonished to find Henndorf in Vermont, when I found Vermont in Henndorf? Shall I not understand the Psalms of David because I have neither blood nor memories of Palestine? Does Tolstoy seem strange to me, or Housman, or Rimbaud?

Carl says in this book, "Home is not where a man is born, but where he wants to die." To date, I think, he would want to die in Henndorf. He was happiest and most productive there. But who can tell what adventures and elements will enter into the next decades of the life of a man who has always treated life as an adventure—an adventure of the mind and heart?

*Second Wind* is a declaration of the intention to live, not merely survive. Life is a continual dying and becoming, and here the German exile records his deaths and resurrections.



The process is painful, but God knows that it is not boring. Not for an instant does this child of war, inflation, abysmal poverty, brilliant success, and exile repudiate his times. He accepts them. He accepts, not fatalistically but affirmatively. He knows that he is a passenger between two worlds. Not Germany and America are the two worlds, but the past century that blew up in the last world war and the future that has not yet been born. Nazi-ism is not the end of the world. It is a stop on the march of mankind towards something new and positive. This something new and positive may show its features first and most clearly in America—who can tell? One discusses them already in England. Or in Germany. The emigration becomes, for this emigrant, something transcendental. The twentieth-century migration of peoples can no longer be regarded as a series of personal disasters, for it is too vast. On the move are “children and kings, stammering beginners and the mature, great minds and spirits—Romain Rolland and Maeterlinck—explorers, inventors, nursing mothers, and young lovers . . .” “One could imagine Goethe as a professor in Princeton or Beethoven giving music lessons in Boston. In such a time exile is neither flight nor curse, but destiny.” “And a man must love his destiny.”

Our times—and any times—are best reported through the account of what goes on in sensitive minds that have fully lived through them and fully realized them. That is why *Personal History* was so illuminating a book. For in it Vincent Sheean told what the world had done to Vincent Sheean. This is the Personal History of a man of Sheean's generation—a fighter, an artist, a doer, a dreamer.

There is no despair in this book—no sense of having been part of a decaying society now irretrievably lost. Carl Zuckmayer's generation was searching for a new world, and though his generation did not find it in their own country, he

## INTRODUCTION

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affirms the faith that it will be found. A society is dying, but Europe and the world are not dying. The essence of what is coming to birth Zuckmayer intuitively feels, and he sketches an outline of it in the last pages of this biography: the story, it turns out to be, of a love affair with life—with *all* of life: war, peace, pleasure, pain, poverty, riches, home, exile, past, present, and the time to come.

DOROTHY THOMPSON





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## CHAPTER ONE

### *A Cat Has Nine Lives*

THEY say a cat has nine lives. A human being who has chosen the first half of the twentieth century for his earthly existence should really have eighteen. But at least he, like the cat, must have his nine, and furthermore he must—and here he differs from the cat—live them one after another instead of simultaneously. In any case, he should resemble the cat in all of his essential make-up, for if he lacks a certain ever-wakeful predatory instinct, or a certain scorn of men such as is peculiar to even the most cared-for cats, or a kind of inquisitive enjoyment of roving, roistering, running away, love-making, brawling, nocturnal rioting, or that self-centred capacity for purring comfort, when a warm corner by some stove has been found—if he lacks all those things which go to make a cat tough and resilient, he is doomed. He must fall on his feet when he is thrown out of the window, he must swim when he is chucked into the water, he must shake the sparks out of his fur when he is chased through the fire—and the world around him must be made to realize that he has claws even when he offers to it a most amiable little velvet paw. Unless he possesses a good measure of human felinity he would do better never to enter this world.

For this world demands of its children, especially if they originate in Europe, a supreme degree of the power to be transformed: to die and to be born again. Yet, so they say, life exists only in change, and life sweeps us along on its tide of adventure, dreams, magic, to a sea of uncertainties, terrible and wonderful things, whether we will or no. Change thy-



self! Change thyself! Perhaps the world will change along with thee.

I was born (again) in June 1939. My cradle was an Atlantic steamship sailing under the Dutch flag. I uttered my first cry—it was a cry of joy—on the dock in Hoboken after the customs formalities were over. I am, for the present, a rather anæmic infant—and this fact I beg you to interpret in a purely material sense—but I have an immense appetite. I already know how to walk, although over here that capacity seems to be rated lower than the ability to drive a car; I am learning to talk, in the usual way: from mouth to ear and *vice versa*. The grown-ups smile in a friendly and indulgent way as they listen to my first lisping accents, and when I laugh at them or crow, to prove to them how beautiful I think their world is, they are pleased and nod their heads approvingly. I live in a bright and airy room—my two windows look out on the great sweep of the Hudson—and here I can do everything an infant needs for its development: I can cry and drink and dream.

America is a powerful nurse. She has taken me to her breast, and I feel the stream of her life course through my veins. She carries me round, she swings me through the air, she lets me kick. In the few months since I emerged from the baptismal font I have experienced things which an active life would normally have spread over several years; it has all been poignant, dangerous, and beautiful, and has left no time for brooding. I have seen the East Coast and the West, New England and California, Nevada and Miami, San Francisco and New Orleans. But my bed stands on the Hudson. And a great wind roars through my sleeping hours.

During the daytime I hardly ever think of my earlier lives, which encompass more than four decades, and when I am



asleep they certainly do not come to my mind. It is only between the daylight and the dark that they rise to the surface, in that hour which belongs only to man, in that time for daydreams, when you collect yourself and meditate on things that you want to remember or forget.

They seem to lie so far in the past, those earlier lives, with their births and deaths. It was all so long ago that I can talk about them now as though they were pictures, sagas, or legends. In telling about them I shall do it in the way things happen in dreams, the way landscapes appear when a mist rises or an aeroplane pierces the clouds, not in sequence, not in the deadly and boring order imposed on us by biological continuity which ends in death. I am going to tell you of the dreams I had with my eyes wide open and the most beautiful of which lie side by side with the most hideous.

## § 2

The house I see in my dream is in Austria. It stands in the foothills some ten miles from Salzburg. I still believe to-day that it is the most beautiful house in the world. When I was obliged to leave it it had belonged to me for nearly thirteen years. In that earlier life of mine I was determined to spend at least another forty years in it and one day to die there, but death has its own ideas about time and place. The house was a three-hundred-year-old mill, known as the Meadow Mill, because from its windows you saw nothing but upland meadows and behind them the steeple of the village church. A part of the meadows belonged with the property. Many trees went with it too, a wall of dark firs which shut it off from the narrow road, tall larches on the hill behind for it to lean against, old spreading chestnut trees in the courtyard, under which there were tables and chairs, and old or

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newly planted fruit- or nut-trees. Edged with leafy, blossoming bushes, the brook rushed along the house and tumbled into the old mill-race, hemmed in by a broad wall. You could hear the ever-changing music of the water through every room in the house. Sometimes of a winter's night you would think the village bells were ringing or that a troop of soldiers was tramping through the snow to the tune of some ancient melody, but it was only the brook mocking us. In summertime the cool vapour from the brook floated in the windows, and the air round your bed was laden with the sweet scent of hay.

The growing of the grass determined the rhythm of our lives. In winter it slumbered, grey and golden, under the snow. When the snow melted the meadows were sprayed with an acrid-smelling manure, to strengthen the grass roots by seeping into the ground. In the spring, when the meadows sprouted luxuriantly, we combed all the old dried grass and rubbish from the autumn before out of their hair. Then came the first cutting and then the second cutting. A long row of peasants waded through the tall, waving grass with bare feet and scythed it with soft, swishing strokes to death. The sun burned their backs, the flies buzzed round their ears, and we carried fresh, cool water or beer up to them for their noon-day meal.

Then in October came the cows, stalking through the early morning mists like antediluvian creatures and munching the last blades of green in the meadows. Then amid the cows a tiny red spot might appear, hopping round like a hunted flea; but, unlike that little animal, it produced wave upon wave of shrill tones. This was the cap of my daughter Winnetou, who on her way back from school could never resist driving the big bull ahead of her with prods from a stick, as though she were playing at being in a circus or a bull ring, tapping him first on



the muzzle and then running between his legs. Her guardian angel, invisible and breathless, must have kept close at her heels.

In the garden stood Alice, my wife, a broad-brimmed straw hat on her head to protect her wee but perpetually upturned nose, which, in spite of its abbreviated size, was always the first spot to be burned by the sun. She held a pair of clippers or a rake in her hand, and had become such a complete rustic that it took years of cosmetic applications and civilizing influences to return her to a state of grace as an urban inhabitant. In fact, the process is still going on at the present time. Over the fence or across the brook she chattered away with some neighbouring farmer—in a dialect that sounded like the original language of the Nibelungen sagas and which was quite incomprehensible to the majority of German-speaking people—about his youngest child's toothache or his hired man's carbuncles, while my string of hunting dogs hovered round my door, trembling with anticipation because they knew that a fine autumn day was bound to get me out. To be sure, they thought, he is a playwright, and you must not begrudge him the time he needs for writing or for pretending to write. But he should not exaggerate. He really should not waste so much good time on what he is pleased to call work. He ought frankly to admit that he would rather go for a walk. He was not born to sit at a desk, and, in any case, he will never die in his bed. He will drop on his face one day in the forest, but let us hope that will not be until he is ninety; or he will fall by the wayside some time on a journey. Why does he have to keep going away—to the cities, to rehearsals in theatres and other nonsensical enterprises where he can't take us along? Good night, thought the dogs, and sighed a little. We can hardly keep him on the leash for six months and off he slips again. It's a tough time when a man



can't make up his mind whether he is a farmer or a tight-rope dancer. And they clambered impatiently, whimpering, against the wall where my stick and my hat with the black-cock feather in it were hung.

Then there was the long trail through the woods along the foothills above the lake, where for thirteen years I never met a living soul unless it was a hunter or a woodchopper, and the resting-place up on the lonely top of the mountain, where the absolute silence was broken only by the call of a bird or the echo of a distant blow of an axe. And the return through the village at twilight, with a drink in the cool, vaulted chambers of the inn, where one sat round a broad table with the farmers. And then at last homeward bound, after a day of sunshine, wind, or rain—the house! The return *home*.

Life has been compared to a journey, and perhaps the times when we stay in one place are only breathing spells. My life was never quite stationary. It was always divided between city and village, between the adventure of art and foreign lands and that greater adventure of simple country life, growth, weather, and the turning seasons. I think it says somewhere in the Bible: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth; . . . for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." But mine clung to that house in the village, not because it belonged to me, but because I belonged to it and to the grass and to the water. It was a fully rounded life, in material things, in itself, in friends. It had the complete perfection of a dream—and it vanished suddenly, as dreams do.

### § 3

How the end came in Austria every one knows. But how it looked in the dream, the lived-through reality, only we who were there really know. A few weeks earlier northern lights



were seen over the whole of Austria. It was mid-January. Northern lights are extraordinarily rare in this region, a true phenomenon. They said that no such thing had been seen since 1866, in the year when the Austrians were defeated by the Prussians. These northern lights—in January 1938—were so strong and flared so brightly that they had the appearance of a nocturnal conflagration. They came up about midnight, and in our village the fire-engine was called out because the people really believed the next town was on fire. About this same time a bird of ill omen was seen in Vienna, a sport of the sparrow family, an albino creature with strangely flecked palish feathers. It was said to appear only when great plagues or catastrophes were impending. All this is superstition and for that reason was probably true, like so many superstitious happenings. The weather at this time was also as unusual as the other phenomena: for weeks there was neither rain nor snow, the sky was cloudless day after day; in midwinter we lay out on the bare ground in the brilliant sunshine, and it was as hot as in summer in this unholy month of March, so that everything, fruit-trees, grapes, and flowers, bloomed too early. Then in May a late and heavy frost blasted all this beauty.

On the 11th of March in Vienna we all still believed that Austria could be saved and with it Europe. At least we were prepared to make a stand for it. Schuschnigg had announced a plebiscite, so he must have felt strong enough to take up the challenge. We were full of hope and ready to do our utmost.

All those days the atmosphere in Vienna was quite extraordinary. The leaders of the Nazi party had received a supremely shrewd order from Germany: Only children on the streets! Let the grown-ups stay indoors!

The result was that in the last days of Austria, while Hitler's



invading army was gathering on the border, the main thoroughfares of Vienna were clogged with ever-increasing hosts of youngsters of all ages who carried swastikas and cried, "*Heil Hitler!*" The police were helpless. They stood there heavily armed but unable to act. The Government had proclaimed a policy of reconciliation in Austria; it could not be inaugurated by firing on children. Besides, the Government knew only too well that the killing of a single twelve-year-old child would be a welcome occasion for Berlin to seize upon to 'restore order,' as they liked to call it. So nothing happened; the children marched about and yelled, and the grown-ups stood by, silent, some depressed, some determined. Undoubtedly the majority in the city hoped for Schuschnigg's victory, for a final and firm guarantee of an independent, free Austria.

On the 11th of March a violent wind blew up from the south, the *Foehn*, as hot and dry as though it came from the desert. It whirled the handbills, urging citizens to vote in the plebiscite, like dry leaves along the streets. Papers fluttered everywhere. They fell like a blizzard from the lorries on which groups of workers rode slowly through the city, demonstrating their loyalty to Austria. It was made known that all the workers, even the former Socialists and Communists, would vote solidly for Schuschnigg and Austria, although they still remembered the blood spilled in February 1934. They knew that Schuschnigg was trying for conciliation, and anything seemed preferable to Hitler. Throughout the whole country the sentiment was growing for Austria and against the Anschluss. Hopeful excitement raged feverishly through the last night.

On the morning of March 11th, the day of the catastrophe, I lived through something which had nothing to do with politics, but was an integral expression of human imagina-



tion. It was the first rehearsal of a new play I had just finished, and which was to be produced immediately in Vienna's finest theatre and with its best actors.

And so it happened that in the forenoon of this fateful day, in the twilight of a dimly lit theatre, on the empty bare stage, a group of people completely forgot the world outside, the danger and the crisis with which all our destinies were bound up, and for a few hours gave themselves up to that irresistible enchantment we call the theatre, art, transfiguration. We argued over cuts, sequences, changes, as though there were nothing more important, more significant, more decisive, in the world or in our lives. Perhaps we unconsciously surrendered ourselves more than usual to this magic. Perhaps we sensed deep down inside ourselves that this was the last oasis, the last hour of the Present. That afternoon, when we left the theatre and stepped from its artificial light into the spring sunshine, everything for which we had just been working and planning was part of the Past. It was all over. An hour later, as the sun went down, Schuschnigg spoke his last words over the wireless. "I yield to force. God protect Austria."

#### § 4

That evening pandemonium broke loose. The gates of hell were opened, and its lowest, most menacing, and foulest denizens were set free. The city was transformed into a nightmare picture of Hieronymus Bosch; evil and demoniacal spirits seemed to rise from the grave. The air was rent with the incessant noise of piercing, horrifying, hysterical shrieking, which went on day and night. And the people's faces were distorted out of all human semblance; some with fright, some with deceit, some with savage, hateful triumph.

In my earlier lives I had seen something of human rage and



panic. During the Great War I was in a dozen battles. I lived through the Communist uprisings after the War, fighting in the streets and public halls. I experienced the first part of the Nazi domination in Berlin. But none of that could compare with these days in Vienna. What was unleashed here had nothing in common with the early Nazi movement in Germany, which at least seemed to be motivated by a modicum of national idealism. What was unleashed here was the revolution of greed, envy, bitterness, blind and most malicious vindictiveness. A revolution may always be horrible, but the horror can be borne, overcome, conquered, if it is a revolution of the human spirit; or if what caused the overturn was a spirit or derived from the spirit. But here what was unloosed was only the mob, a blind passion for destruction, and its hatred was all directed against everything which nature or human will had ennobled. It was a witches' Sabbath for the mob and the death of all human dignity.

Some of my friends left the country that very evening. That was still easy to do—the frontiers were still open. But I did not wish to go. Perhaps I was inhibited during those days by a sense of obstinacy or shame. Perhaps it was a last endeavour in me to fight for something I had helped to build. I knew that Austria was doomed. My profession was linked with the German language, with German culture, and this was its last refuge. Logic must have told me that it was lost however one looked at it, but my feelings rebelled against letting everything go and saving just my life. I was too bound up with too many people, in the city and back in my village, people I could not take with me. I still dreamed of fighting back. The disappointment of not raising an arm in self-defence had come too quickly. I still maintained the crazy attitude that I had 'done nothing,' broken no laws which



could subject me to prosecution. Yet by then all law was completely wiped out.

The persecutions began with lightning speed and were carried out in a blinding rage. Only in appearance did they seem to follow certain principles or to be related to national exigencies such as arise from racial reasons or political opposition. It is completely foolish and superfluous to ask what a person 'did' to make it necessary for him to flee from the Nazis or be destroyed by them. In many cases the fact that you did nothing for them was sufficient; or if you merely do not suit them that is ground enough. In the very instant when that occurs you are outlawed, which means that you are subject to a process of annihilation which is worse than death. The terror, by means of which a dictatorship holds subjects in check, is not by any means the fear of death. A man who offers opposition in revolutionary times must be prepared for the eventuality of being shot, and that is not the worst if everything else for which he has lived is crashing around him. But to be inwardly and outwardly crushed, humiliated, downtrodden, to be maimed by tortures of the spirit as well as of the flesh, and yet to be obliged to live on, to be forced to continue a wretched and hopeless existence, without knowing what each day can bring forth, without any intimation of possible release—that is the real terror spread by the dictatorship regime. People who live in democratic countries, who have grown up with traditions of justice, cannot conceive of this complete and radical overthrow of the rules of reason established through the centuries, and especially since this is all being done under the cover of establishing order, discipline, training, and the common good. Perhaps it exceeds human imagination. I know that it went beyond the bounds of mine in this moment of bewilderment, even though I knew something of its nature. But events



soon cleared our minds and in a drastic fashion. Whoever did not belong to the Nazis, whoever in any way had given them grounds for jealousy or displeasure, through public recognition or success, and who in addition had any possessions which could be taken from him, as, for example, a house—he was hourly in the greatest danger.

The days from March the 12th to the 15th, when I crossed the border, were filled with such tension that they almost exceed the power of memory to contain them. Certain phases seem like vivid dreams to me now.

On Saturday, the 12th of March, at noon I was called up by a man who had been a close friend of mine, from whom I had become estranged because of his inclination towards the Nazis. He happened to be in Vienna and wanted to do anything he could to help me in the situation. As he was in high favour with the Nazis in Germany he believed that he would be able to do this. In this moment our feeling of comradeship overcame all other obstacles. We met, and he realized what conflict was going on inside me: how everything restrained me from fleeing while the flood of events more and more urged me to take to flight. In my presence he telephoned to the German Embassy in Vienna to convince himself of what the situation really was: as to whether or not I was menaced by any danger. Thereupon ensued, as seen in retrospect, one of the most interesting conversations of those confused times.

They knew me, of course, at the German Embassy. I had even met the smooth Herr von Papen there on various occasions. We always bowed to each other as if there were nothing wrong. But the *attaché* to whom my friend spoke on this particular morning was better known to me. He came from my original homeland on the Rhine, and he bore the same name as one of the most distinguished bishops in my native city of Mainz. Perhaps, as a Catholic and a nobleman, he may



have had more sympathy in the present instance with the defenders of Austria than with his chiefs, the Nazis. In any case, he was privy to the official information service of the German Embassy.

This gentleman, who on that day was in unbroken communication with the new Nazi regime in Austria and with Berlin, assured my friend that, to the best of his knowledge, I was in no danger. I could safely remain there. Things would be done quite differently in Austria. He had absolute knowledge that writers of my type would not be persecuted. I was a Catholic and not classed either as a Jew or a political writer. He could personally guarantee that I was in no danger. Two hours after this telephone conversation that man was dead.

As he left the German Embassy he was seized by a squad of Nazis, probably because of his "unreliability" from the irreconcilable point of view of the party. He was driven in a motor-car to Modena Park, a large garden-like plantation in the middle of the city, and murdered. His body was thrown into the Danube, from which it was retrieved a few days later. His name was Freiherr von Ketteler.

## § 5

On that Sunday, the 13th of March, hundreds of heavy German bombing planes landed at Aspern, the airport of Vienna. All day their engines thundered. Squadrons of a hundred and fifty or more flew low back and forth over the city, like swarms of angry hornets. What with the yelling in the streets and the roars of the loud-speakers, relaying Hitler's latest pronouncements with deadening repetition, the noise with its incessant threats was unspeakably unnerving and demoniacal. The deafening din of the end of a world rent the air.



A woman's sense of logic, no matter what may usually be said to the contrary, works more surely and quickly than a man's, at least when it has to deal with practical, earthly matters. If there were no women in our lives we should have gone to the dogs a thousand times over, and all our cat qualities would have been of no avail. This was what happened now.

My wife knew me well, for by this time she had been married to me for thirteen years. It was perfectly clear to her that, unless she could persuade me to flee, I was lost. She knew that I should strike back if anyone laid a hand on me. On that I was determined, and the bullet which would presumably have followed would have been far more acceptable to me than to be locked up in a camp by my own people and treated as a slave.

To do things by 'shock' is a favourite way with the Nazis, and that is how the arrests began. Already they were herding Jews, aristocrats, people who had defended the idea of Austria's independence, and still others for no reason at all through the streets and forcing them to wash the pavements. The next day, as I drove to the station, I saw with my own eyes an old gentleman with a pail and a tiny inadequate brush down on his knees in the filth of the street, under the surveillance of a squad of Storm Troopers and a street crowd. But the sight did not seem to arouse any particular satisfaction in the crowd. They just stood there and watched. Perhaps some of them were ashamed. Or it may be that, for all their superiority, they were a little scared.

The torture and murder squads had already started on their rounds, searching out the homes of persons subject to official disapproval or cupidity. We all know how they went about their job. If they went too far or stole too much the excuse was that it must have been done by Communists masquerading as Storm Troopers. However, this fine distinction soon

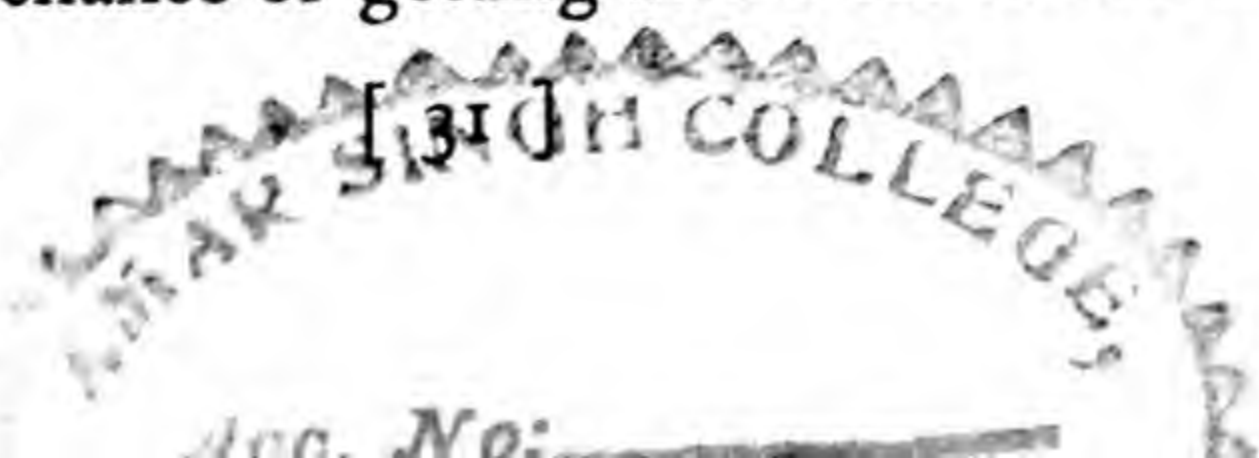


lost its point. And before long the popular joke was to call the Hitler Brown Shirts "beefsteaks," brown on the outside and red on the inside.

Whereas all Sunday morning our telephone had been ringing and calls had been coming through from people who wanted to warn me and urge me to leave, in the course of the afternoon it was quite silent. There it stood, on the table, a small black instrument of ill omen, of which the demons had already gained possession. If anyone took up the receiver he was immediately aware of a strange clicking sound. Wire-tapping was already in effect. The State Secret Police works fast. And since those hours the oppressed people of Vienna have had no further use of their telephones, unless it be to ask the butcher when a piece of meat may be obtainable. For the rest they have reverted to the methods of ancient times: a whispered word, a slip of paper secretly stuck in a pocket, a furtive sign in passing by.

During the evening of that Sunday, made hideous by the incessant droning of aeroplanes, Alice and my best woman friend in Vienna succeeded in persuading me that there was nothing left to do but get out of the country in the quickest possible way. This friend, who was a great artist and who had a thousand reasons to compel her to remain in Vienna, came at nightfall to take me to her home in case of emergency; she feared the worst for me if I spent even one more night in my home. A few of my friends, who were far less suspect than I, were already on their way to Dachau. As I was packing my things I knew that it was literally *at the very last minute*.

I had to go away alone. My wife and daughters would have the opportunity of leaving the country later in the normal way. Besides, my only chance of getting across the border lay in my





being able to make my absence seem temporary and not let my departure look like an escape. A telegram from Alexander Korda, which I had just received and which contained a request to come to London to work on a film scenario, provided me with the necessary pretext. My passport was in order, and my name had not yet been put on the list of people who were to be deprived of their citizenship; so I had a real hope of getting away.

We were not in the mood for farewells. Had it not been for practical necessity we should rather not have mentioned the matter. But there were people who belonged to us, and in moments like these you quickly find out who belongs to you. In our case it was our cook, who for years had kept house for us in town and in the country and who was eternally quarrelling with us, apparently as an evidence of her especial and true devotion and loyalty. She and her seventeen-year-old niece, who had come to us when she was still a child, now helped me pack. They were dissolved in tears. When everything was ready—no one had been able even to think of preparing food on that day—I asked the cook to bring us something to eat from the refrigerator and to remain in the room with us. Meantime I had been in the wine cellar to take one last avid look at my choice wines, and had brought up some champagne. I then asked the maids to do me the favour of stopping their wailing. They made a valiant effort and restricted themselves to sniffing. Then I poured the champagne and we each drank a glass.

I thanked them and said we should all meet again. In that instant I really believed it. After the second glass we became quite cheerful and talked about all sorts of experiences. Soon the time was up, and I prepared to leave.



## § 6

I left by train. All the places in the planes bound for other countries were sold for days in advance. Besides, we knew that the Gestapo was stationed at the airport and was holding back all suspects.

The stretch from Vienna to the Swiss border runs the whole length of Austria. It was a brilliant early spring day; rarely had the countryside looked more lovely to me. The mountains were still capped with snow, but the edges of the forests showed signs of fresh green. Towards noon the train skirted the lake on the shore of which lay our village, my house. I stood in the corridor of the express train and looked out. I might have tried to read, but I didn't want to do that. The blue sky was reflected in the water. I saw my bathing-hut, which stood on the steep and lonely wooded shore. I thought I heard my dogs bark.

Then suddenly, between me and the landscape, there thundered a heavy troop train, moving eastward on the next track—German batteries heading for Vienna. The men, squatting beside their light howitzers and the gun-carriages on the open cars, were in grey uniforms and looked young and fresh, as we did in 1914 when we started for France. The people in my train opened the windows, waved to them, and many cried, "*Heil Hitler!*" pointing to the swastikas which they wore in their buttonholes out of real or pretended enthusiasm. The German soldiers, who were more accustomed to meet with dull silence or bitter faces at home than with such explosions of joy, laughed a little and returned the greetings with what seemed to me to be a slight look of embarrassment. Many were spooning out their soup and did not even look up.

A tall gentleman stood beside me at the window, and whenever he felt himself being watched he automatically put



up his arm in the Hitler salute. When he saw that I was not doing it he suddenly whispered to me, "Do you know what they have done to Schuschnigg?" I shook my head. "The cursed swine," he hissed through his clenched teeth, and then raised his arm again because some one was looking at him. He was, so it appeared, a big industrialist who was compelled to stay behind because he bore so much responsibility for his works and his employees. Now he was obliged to run with the pack. I looked at him and saw how ashamed he was, and the thought that I was leaving that land was easier to bear.

The Salzburg railway station was like an army camp; the invading German troops were quartered all over the place, and they gave the impression of being quiet, well disciplined, and responsible. Neither in their appearance nor in their manners had they anything in common with the Party detachments who had taken over the police and civil administration and in the face of whom even the highest military authorities were powerless. The same mob, which I had come to know in Vienna, was flooding the station, yelling and rioting. I wanted to buy some cigars, but the keeper of the tobacco stall, a fifty-year-old widow whose customer I had been for years, was running round after the Germans, sticking cigarettes in their pockets. "German brothers!" she cried and rolled her eyes ecstatically. She even seemed to froth at the mouth. They say that when the first German howitzer battery rolled into the town she went down on her knees in the street. . . . A few weeks earlier I had heard her talking loudly about "loyalty to Austria." More and more I began to understand Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*.

In the midst of the excited onlookers stood a man in a peasant's hunting jacket with his hat pulled down deep over his forehead. He was one of my most devoted friends from our village who had been notified that I was passing through.



Originally I had intended to drive out to my home and rescue at least my manuscripts which lay in a cupboard.

The man moved unobtrusively nearer until he stood half facing me. "Get back into the train at once," he said, as if he were talking to himself or into thin air. "Don't let yourself be seen. They are already out there." When I asked a question he went on, "The Gestapo . . . in your house . . . going through everything. They are looking for you. They beat Wiedner to death in the cellar." Wiedner was a young constable, a handsome, lively peasant, who had often come to our house to play on his zither. In the Nazi riots of 1934 he had done his duty; now he had reaped his reward. I had found out enough. I whispered a "good-bye" and went back into the train. When it finally pulled out I realized how my heart was pounding. As soon as the train left the platform the man from the village suddenly whipped off his cap and waved it frantically after us.

A few hours later the train stopped in Innsbrück. From there it is about three hours to the border, and here the first Nazi patrol came through the compartments.

A thickset man in civilian clothes, with a swastika band on his arm and a police badge, suddenly appeared in my compartment. Behind him stood two armed Brownshirts.

"Show your passport."

At first he nodded approvingly when he saw it was a German passport. But then he read the identification more closely. "A writer!" He noted my professional status and glowered at me. "Leave the train. Take your bags."

"Why?" I asked.

"Our Führer does not like the Press," was his brusque reply.

"But I do not belong to the Press," I said. "I write plays and books."

"We'll see about that," he said. "Leave the train."



I tried to protest that I was expected in London, that I could not miss my Channel boat . . .

"Leave the train!" he roared at me. The Brownshirts came one step closer. There was nothing left for me to do but obey.

On the platform I was led up to a group of other delinquents or suspects who had already been gathered together. They all carried their bags in their hands.

"Forward march!" some one ordered.

As we left the station I saw my express train pull out. We were led across the station square in single file; the populace gaped at us. I saw the Tiroler Hof, that fine hotel where I had stayed so often and spent such happy hours. And I was aware of a great thirst for a bottle of red wine. My pulse was steady, but I was consumed with a towering rage.

As we were going up the stairs at police headquarters a gentleman stepped up to me and whispered a number. It was A-13026. It was a Vienna telephone number. I shall never forget it (although I cannot remember even my own number there). "Please call it up," he said without moving his lips, "if you get out of here. Tell them I am arrested here. I am Dr A——" His name was known in political circles. I nodded and softly repeated the number. When they took him away later he greeted me with his eyes.

For hours we sat about on our bags in the bare corridor—and waited. We were under constant surveillance, so that we could not talk to each other. There was a great deal of traffic at police headquarters, a perpetual coming and going; ashen-pale people were being brought in, flanked by two constables, then they disappeared behind doors. It was the day on which Schuschnigg's organization, the Fatherland Front, was being mopped up.

My hunger, my thirst, and my rage were steadily increas-



ing. When I was finally taken into an office for examination I no longer cared what happened to me. I knew it was a case of sink or swim, and I had nothing to lose. Moreover, I was familiar with the type of petty official and knew how to handle him. I had hardly set foot in the room when I broke out in loud and angry threats.

"This is impossible!" I roared at the official in charge, who was seated at a table with several Brownshirts. "I am held up for no good reason and made to lose all my connexions! You will have to make good to me the loss incurred! . . ." And so on in the same vein. Meantime I had flung my good German passport down on the table and tried to raise my voice still louder to yell, "Satisfy yourself whether there are any objections against me!"

I felt instantly that my method was successful.

The men in uniform were all Austrians, who were not yet familiar with the ropes, and whose hearts sank right into their boots when a German shouted at them during those first few days.

I showed them my telegram from London, which they could not read because it was in English. I scolded still more about wasting my time, and then I became more amiable.

The man who had taken me off the train stood there and watched me with some uncertainty and hostility.

"He is a writer," he said, pointing at me. "That's suspicious. Our Führer does not like the Press."

"But I write for the films," I shouted, "and the Führer does like them!"

"Yes," said the official in charge, "he does like them. I know your home," he added in a friendly tone. "I have gone in swimming there. A lovely spot."

"It is indeed," said I. "And now what do you want of me?"



He stood up.

I had evidently convinced him completely.

"In days like these," he said, "mistakes will happen. You may hurry along, but go out the back door. The people out there"—he pointed towards the corridor where a number of my companions in distress were still waiting—"they can't get off so easily. They're Jews," he added, and then with a "*Heil Hitler!*" I was dismissed.

As I went down the back stairs I was followed by a young Storm Trooper in a brown shirt. I heard his footsteps, but did not turn round. Suddenly he laid his hand on my shoulder and I halted. He drew a little volume from his pocket, a book I had published the year before. It was called *Summer in Austria*.

"I have just read this," he said and smiled confidentially. "Would you autograph it for me?"

I wrote my name with the fountain-pen he handed to me. And suddenly he bent closer to me.

"Now there won't be any more summer in Austria," he said softly. "Good-bye, and don't come back. Be careful on the border," he added.

Then he turned and walked swiftly away. The swastika on his arm gleamed.

## § 7

When I got back to the station I was in a dripping perspiration, and not just because of carrying my bags.

It was late at night by now, and I was waiting for the next train to the border. It came through, with some delay, at midnight. It was jammed with refugees, and the steps of the cars were guarded by patrols of men in brown and black uniforms.



I tried to push my way into one of the overcrowded compartments, and as I was hot I unbuttoned my overcoat for the first time all day. Then something remarkable and distressing occurred.

As I entered the lively conversation in the compartment came to a dead stop, and then an elderly, extremely Jewish gentleman jumped up, pointed to his seat, and said rather humbly, "Won't you take my seat, sir?"

I shook my head in surprise and begged him to keep his seat, but this he refused to do. Moreover, the others all pushed over to make room for me as though I were some evil spirit.

Suddenly I realized the reason for their attitude.

In those days if you wanted to avoid disagreeable incidents in Austria you wore a swastika in your buttonhole. You could buy them for a few pennies in the streets. If you did not wear one you were immediately marked as a Jew or an enemy to the State and had to be prepared to be insulted and maltreated. The first thing people did when they met was to look at each other's buttonhole.

I neither could nor would wear a swastika, not even for appearances. But, in order not to jeopardize my journey, and also to inspire awe in any mob which might threaten me with attack, I had put something else on my lapel—my Great War decorations.

I had preserved these medals, each one of which was bound up with memories of mortal danger, but without even dreaming that they would one day save my life. I had quite forgotten that I had fastened them, like so many protective charms, to my jacket under my overcoat, and first realized the effect they produced when I saw the frightened eyes of my fellow-passengers; they looked at these symbols of highest German military awards, and evidently took me for a regular bully and Jew-baiter. Some one offered me a drink of brandy, and



after I politely accepted it conversation was resumed. The others became less diffident, having decided that I was also human. They were terrified at the prospect of the ordeal ahead on the border. I sensed that they envied what they supposed was my secure position. They did not dream that I had more to fear, and better grounds for that fear, than any of them.

It was a journey of three hours, in the middle of the night, and the nearer we came to the border the more anguished, excited, and hectic became the state of mind of the people in the train. Patrols passed incessantly through the corridors, came into the compartments, checking each individual passenger, asking his name, his reason for travelling, and how much money he had. No one was allowed to take more than ten marks out of the country, and even the slightest infringement of this rule was punished with the heaviest penalties and even, under certain circumstances, with death. Yet there was always the suspicion that individual refugees would attempt to smuggle out larger sums. For that reason the Nazis offered special rewards for the discovery of money or other valuables on persons crossing the border. Thus there was added to this exaggerated and inescapable checking of passengers a kind of cold cunning. This was, in miniature, a sample of the whole system of a dictatorship which is built on calculated and universal intimidation; each individual must feel that he is under constant observation and that he can be 'taken up' at any given instant.

My fellow-passengers were average people who were probably not subject to personal persecution, but who feared the coming persecution of their race or class. Perhaps some of them had been wicked or unscrupulous in business, jackals of political and economic battlefields. But the majority of them impressed me as harmless, unhappy creatures. There was



one small, plump man with a round blond head. His first name was Baldur, and he was as gentle as Wotan. But he was fleeing from the Nuremberg Laws, which forbid race pollution, and with him was his Jewish *fiancée*, Rebecca, a girl two heads taller than he and who wore spectacles. They sat there like chickens on a perch, who have pulled in their necks because they see the cook coming with a knife. They consulted nervously and helplessly about what they ought to say on the border. I gave them the sound advice to say nothing and to act as if they did not know each other. Yet immediately afterwards a martial-looking S.S.—a Blackshirt—came along while the train was still moving, and as soon as the passports had been checked they called attention to themselves by looking at and nodding to each other.

“Do you know this man?” asked the Blackshirt abruptly.

“Yes,” she stammered, “he is my *fiancé*. . . .”

Whereupon the Storm Trooper took back both of their passports, stuck them into his pocket, and went out into the corridor, where he nonchalantly lit a cigarette.

The young couple were frightened to death; their faces were white and self-conscious. And Baldur kept shaking his head and saying moodily to himself:

“My *fiancé*! This is a psychological puzzle to me. We are not—that is to say; we have never even used the word! We have—well, just been together. And now she suddenly comes out with, ‘My *fiancé*,’ and to that fellow too!”

“But I couldn’t tell him,” she stammered, “that we are affinities. . . . That our relationship is more of a spiritual nature,” she went on, and blushed to the roots of her hair.

They were so touching in their misery and so unconsciously comic that we couldn’t even look in their direction, and, in spite of all the rules for maintaining a feeling of dramatic



tension, I am going to assume that they got through safely, and I hope that they are to-day faithful affinities for life. I wish them a happy marriage and many children.

There was another man in our compartment, the one who gave me the drink of brandy. He drank a great deal himself, from a flask, and squirmed round on his seat with increasing nervousness. "My father was a commanding general in the Imperial Army," he kept saying to himself. "What can they do to me?" He was in a perspiration, and his forehead was scarlet. Every time the passengers were checked for the amount of money they were carrying he gave the same answer as all the rest, that he had no more than the allotted ten marks. But five minutes before we reached the frontier, when the train was already slowing down, he suddenly became deathly pale, as though he were going to be ill. He jumped up, pulled the window open, tore a bundle of bank-notes from an inside pocket, and threw it out into the night. . . . It was a thick packet. If they had found it on him he would have spent many years in gaol. Then he fell back into his seat, breathing hoarsely. The sweat was pouring down his face. He had, literally, thrown his money out of the window.

These are just a few examples of all the hundreds of confused human destinies which passed before my eyes during that night. Now and then, when the train stopped at stations, certain names were called, and if their bearers were found they were put off. Suddenly my name was called, and I felt a pang, although what I heard was a woman's voice. A Polish lady who had seen me from the platform came into my compartment. She knew me from my pictures in the papers and wanted to ask me about Max Reinhardt and Helene Thimig, whom she greatly admired, and whether *Everyman* would be played that year in Salzburg. She herself was fleeing, but a conversation about the theatre seemed to her to be more ex-



citing than her own situation; so she chattered away about art, culture, and society as if all that still existed. I couldn't help thinking of the aristocrats in prison during the French Revolution. The present experience seemed to me a farce in very poor taste. Perhaps they thought the same about theirs. Experiences are romantic only in retrospect. Fresh blood has a horrible smell.

When we slowly puffed into the station which lies high in the mountains on the border, into the harsh glare of the arc lights, I had no longer any fear or hope in me. At that instant I neither felt nor thought anything. I was filled with a frigid tension which made me act and react subconsciously. It was something like the self-hypnosis of a hunted being who concentrates all his instincts of self-preservation. It seems to me now that that is how a fox must feel when he hears the pack on his trail: cold, alone, and ready for anything.

## § 8

"Every one out, with your luggage! This train is being cleared!"

"Porter!" I yelled.

"Carry it yourself!" yelled back a voice. "No porters here for any of you."

As passengers in this train we were all lumped in the plural. We were part of an insignificant mass. So I picked up the two suitcases into which I had stuffed everything I could take, necessities for a short trip.

I noticed, to my terror, that the customs service had been, almost to a man, taken over by Hitler troops in brown and black uniforms in the place of the usual officials. The station was black with people, the traffic was tremendous. Everywhere large tables had been set up. On them the passengers had



to empty all the contents of their luggage and their pockets. The contents were not taken out in the usual way; pockets were turned completely inside out, and bags were turned upside down and then thumped for false bottoms. Then each item was inspected with as much care as if they hoped to find the British Crown Jewels; every pair of stockings was unrolled, the trees taken out of shoes; every shirt was shaken out of its folds; every lady's make-up kit was opened and gone through. This held for every single one of the hundreds of passengers, who were then subjected to a physical search, which meant that they were stripped and inspected with the same thoroughness as their luggage. I made up my mind that this magnificent example of German thoroughness must last for hours and hours, and prepared myself for a long-drawn-out torture. Naturally I had neither money nor valuables, but I did have a brief case with a lot of manuscripts of poems and pieces of writing I had begun. And anything written was notoriously calculated to arouse suspicion.

While a heavy-handed man was turning one of my bags out and stirring up all the contents another one, a Blackshirt, demanded my passport. I handed it to him calmly and watched his reactions out of the corner of my eye. He studied my name for a long time; then he suddenly straightened himself as though he had picked up a scent.

"Zuckmayer?" he asked. I nodded.

"*The* Zuckmayer?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean the one with the bad name."

"I don't know that I have a bad reputation. But there is probably no other writer by that name."

His eyes narrowed, like a man who is taking his aim and is sure of a bull's eye.

"Come along," he said.



"But I must stay with my luggage," I protested.

"No need of that," he said, and smiled sarcastically as much as to say, "You won't need any luggage again."

## § 9

I was led to the other end of the long platform while my bags remained in the clutches of uninhibited thoroughness. At the very end of the station, where it was pitch dark, there were several barracks. It smelled of damp acetylene, and a small bicycle lantern over the entrance cast a chalky light. My captor led the way, my passport in his hand, and waved to some of his colleagues who were just booting a herd of delinquents off into the town. "Here's another!" he called to them.

I examined the holster in his belt and weighed the possibility of getting hold of the revolver in it. If the worst comes to the worst, I thought as I looked into his narrowed eyes, *you* are coming with me.

In the barracks a thin blond man sat behind a table. He wore steel-rimmed glasses, and looked both overworked and undernourished.

In front of the table stood a man with his coat thrown open and his head bowed; he had evidently just been examined.

"To the barracks, to be transported," I heard the official's voice pronounce. "If that's too full take him to the local prison. Next man, please."

Two Storm Troopers led the completely broken man out; he seemed to be weeping.

Then I, as the "next man," stepped before my judge.

The other official whispered something in his ear, and he looked up at me through his glasses.

"Carl Zuckmayer?" he said. "Aha."



He looked fixedly at my passport, then turned over the leaves; his face became thoughtful.

He kept turning back to the first page.

I noticed that he was puzzled by the fact that my passport was valid for five years. Jews are given passports which run for six months or at most a year. That was the way you could recognize them. Later they stamped a red "J" on your passport.

Then he looked under the "Z's" in a printed list of names of people subject to prosecution. Evidently he did not find my name there, and he gazed again at my passport with growing uncertainty.

"It's funny," he said, and shook his head. "I'm sure I have heard something about you . . . but I can't quite recall what. I really must apologize," he went on. "I thought you were a Hebrew!" He laughed genially; I grinned vaguely.

He stood up, came round to me with my passport in his hand as though he were going to give it back.

"Where are you going?"

"To London, to write a film scenario."

"Film? That's interesting. Have you already done some films? Any well-known ones?"

"The last was called *Rembrandt*."

"Oh, yes; I saw that one. Nothing objectionable in that from the political angle. I saw it in Vienna last winter when I was detailed to the Storm Troopers' training school. . . ."

He leaned towards me.

"You are a Party member?"

"No," I replied.

In that instant all his genial manner vanished. He drew back his hand with my passport and became my gaoler once more.

"So you," he said sharply, "are a German writer—and not a Party member. Why not?"



His face was hard and menacing.

I did not weigh my answer for even a fraction of a second. And even to-day I cannot tell why I replied as I did. It was one of those completely automatic reactions, but now I know why people believe in the promptings of guardian angels.

"I am not eligible to be a Party member," I answered instantly, "because my writings are not in line with National Socialistic concepts. That is also why they are banned in Germany, and why I am going to work in London. That I am free to travel abroad you can see from my passport. Now give it back to me," I added and stretched out my hand.

But the Storm Trooper stared at me with a peculiar expression. His mouth gaped and his eyes were round. Suddenly he took my outstretched hand and shook it.

"It's marvellous!" he exclaimed. "What a frank confession! What honesty! You can tell you're a German by that!" he cried. (He himself was an Austrian.) "A German is always honest!"

"Do you assume," said I, taking advantage of my favourable impression on him, "that everyone who comes before you is a liar?"

"Most of them are," he exclaimed, "but you—you are a real German! I should never have believed that nowadays anyone would frankly admit he is not a Nazi, that he is under a ban! You—you will be a Party member yet, I promise you!"

"Thanks," I said. "Now may I go back to my luggage?"

"I'm coming with you," he said. "It's time I had some relief. It's wonderful! I do respect you! Your bags are not subject to inspection, I trust." As he said this his forehead wrinkled again.

I remembered my poems, and the thought of another cat-and-mouse situation made me hot all over. Besides, I saw my Black Shirt captor standing at the door and maliciously



watching me. Now, I thought to myself with perfectly cool, conscious deliberation, the moment has come. I unbuttoned my overcoat, as though quite unintentionally, and let my decorations glitter in the lights of the lamps.

The official's eyes were drawn to them as if by magic.

"You were at the front?" he asked.

"Of course," I said.

"An officer?"

I nodded.

"Is that not an Iron Cross of the first class?"

"Yes."

"And—that other one, with the crossed swords . . . ?"

I identified it; it sounded fairly ostentatious.

"You are a hero!" said the Storm Troop leader, and his eyes were like fish's.

"Not that," I said brusquely. "But you can't buy them at every street corner for a few pence."

This allusion to the swastika was quite bold, but it had its effect.

"Splendid!" he ejaculated violently. "You mean the fellow-travellers? The opportunists! That's German humour for you! Magnificent!"

He took off his cap and wiped his forehead. I saw that the back of his head was shaven, and his hair in front was arranged in a swirl like the comb of a parrot.

"We of the younger generation," he went on, as though it were incumbent on him to make a speech, "may have been so unlucky as to miss the Great War, but nevertheless we honour heroes! Attention!" he yelled suddenly in a thundering voice. "S.A. and S.S. men! Line up!"

Meantime we had left the barracks and were nearing the customs inspection. Here the Storm Troop leader, in the midst of the whole crowd of customs inspectors and anxiously



waiting passengers, lined up all his Nazis in front of me. "We honour a hero of the Great War," he cried. "*Heil Hitler!*" A troop of Brownshirts and Blackshirts had formed in a wall in front of me as though for a general inspection. They clicked their heels together so violently that the dust flew, and they bellowed their "*Heil Hitler*" into my face as though I were the Führer himself. I had suddenly become the great man of the frontier station, and I felt very much like the *Hauptmann von Koepenick* in my own play.

"Where is this gentleman's baggage?" bellowed my friend. "Shut it up! Carry it into the train!" I no longer had to raise a finger. My brief case with the poems was not even opened.

"You can go into the station restaurant," said the Storm Troop leader. "We'll be busy for hours with the others."

"But the gentleman has not had his person searched," said an S.A. man.

"He does not have to be searched," replied my protector. "This gentleman is checked!"

So it happened that I was the only person out of the hundreds to escape the procedure which I heard was particularly distressing to ladies, and was executed with great roughness by the wives and daughters of customs employees.

I sat in the restaurant. Hours dragged by. I finally got my claret. I realized that I had not taken any food since Vienna, and I had not slept at all since the 11th of March. This was the 15th; day was breaking slowly. If only we were out of here! Each second might bring some new turn, every shift of frontier officials might mean some new suspicion or discovery, and all the game so far would have been in vain. Now that I was almost safe I was in the throes of deathly fear.

My Nazi 'friend' sat beside me, drinking up my last ten marks, looking at me with glazed eyes, and repeating endlessly his regret at having missed the Great War.



"You may get into another one," I said, and imagined him lying amid the heaps of corpses I had seen between the trenches.

"Yes," he exclaimed enthusiastically. "Let's drink to that!"

From time to time an S.A. man would rush in and announce to me, not to the Storm Troop leader, whom they just called Johnny, "They've just caught another one, with ten thousand shillings in his shoes! We'll fix him all right! The swine!"

"Aren't we going to get away soon?" I asked.

"Not before daylight! We're doing things properly here to-day."

But at last even this came to an end.

The sky was green as glass and cloudless; the sun gleamed on the snowy mountain-tops as the train crossed the Swiss frontier.

It was a day "created by God himself."

The Swiss officials came through the train and made friendly guttural noises. Everything was over.

I sat by the window and thought, "Now you should be happy. Or at least you should feel something like a sense of relief."

But I felt nothing.

I could only think "I shall never be happy again. Perhaps I shall never laugh again."

I was completely indifferent to everything. I did not even care where I was—here, there, or anywhere in the world. It would always be like this. I felt nothing. Not even pain.

I had died.

But—a cat has nine lives.



## CHAPTER TWO

### *Whom It Does Not Kill . . .*

A MAN in the front-line trenches has a peculiar way of sleeping. The instant he is relieved of his post for a short while he falls into sleep as a stone falls into a well, and he sleeps with all of his senses, like an animal whose complete relaxation is not ruffled by reflexes from his blacked-out consciousness. At the same time his sleep is as wary as that of a forest animal; he can throw it off in an instant, like a dark cloth from his face. The smallest change outside, the slightest irregularity in the rhythm of familiar noises, startles him, makes him wide awake, and thrusts him without transition back into the situation in which he must act.

A thin, shrill whistle rapidly swelling to an unbearable pitch, suddenly followed by the dull blast of an explosion. The man springs with both feet from his bunk; his left hand darts for his gas-mask, while his right hand snatches for his rifle from the wall. But he has only upset a glass of water and swept his watch to the floor.

He realizes that he is standing upright beside his own bed.

Instead of the barrel of his gun he is clutching the standard lamp. The water from his overturned glass is dripping on his bare feet.

Early dawn filters through the blinds.

The shrill, thin whistle is dying away in the distance, now rising again, now subsiding.

It must have been the police-siren, the man thinks, or the fire-engines.



And the noise that roused him was the backfiring of some car down in the road.

But now the traffic sounds have merged again into the gentle roar of a distant sea, which makes the quiet even more intense.

It was not an attack. There are no shells bursting here. We are in New York, above the George Washington Bridge.

It is the 18th of May, 1940.

There is no war here. The war is far away somewhere in France.

In France—and in our dreams.

But the war that is so suddenly there in our dreams, as though it had never ended, is not the same one which the Stuka bombers and Messerschmitts are raining down on peaceful lands over there.

It is the last war.

A strange word: the *last* war.

That was what we called it when we crawled out of its charnel-houses and shell-holes to a new life. And we truly believed in those days it was the *last*. The last in our lifetime and perhaps the last in the world.

The mud- and blood-smeared *poilus*, who climbed out of their holes along the Chemin des Dames to fraternize with their defeated enemies, sang that old childlike song:

C'est la lutte finale !  
Formez-vous, et demain  
L'Internationale  
Sera le genre humain.

And in the hearts of the conquered, who bowed in silence to their fate, something echoed that seemed stronger and greater to them than the thunder of battle and the jubilation of victory. They did not sing, but they remembered a Beethoven melody which for four years had seemed as lost to



them as their childhood days: "And all men shall be brothers." . . .

That's a hell of a long time ago.

In the quarter of a century that has elapsed between the present war and the last one I have rarely dreamed of war. And even more rarely have I spoken of it. I have never written a war book. I did not believe that the power of that experience could be translated with complete truthfulness. It was all still too close to be portrayed in a romantic, heroic or critical light. But it is something you carry with you, a constituent part of your body, a substance in your blood, a chemical composition. And the memory of it is not the possession of a single person; it is part of the consciousness of a whole generation of which only a fraction survived, although they all seemed destined for death. That one survived, that one could survive not only in body but also in mind and soul, seems like a miracle. And, like every miracle, it must have its meaning.

It makes me think of Nietzsche's saying: "Whom it does not kill it makes strong."

## § 2

There were twenty-one of us (between the ages of seventeen and eighteen) in the top class in our high school when the war broke out in the summer of 1914. Two weeks later we took the so-called emergency final examinations. Most of us were already in uniform. It was wonderful. We did not have to know anything. The uniform gave a kind of manly dignity to even a dunce, and in the face of that the teacher was powerless. He could not fail a young warrior, who was prepared to sacrifice his life for his fatherland, just because he was weak in Greek prosody. Final exams, the nightmare of



so many years of youth, were turned into a picnic. We were proud and happy, and felt released from the greatest fear of our lives. As for the greater, the eternal fear, the fear of our death, our imagination was insufficient; it was about equal to that of a young hound. The fear of death was something we had yet to learn. It was not among the subjects taught at school.

Only five of the twenty-one in our class did not volunteer on the first day of the war; three of them belonged to a Catholic seminary for priests and therefore had to join the Red Cross, and two were physically unfit. These five envied us and wept for chagrin and despair.

Of the sixteen who went into the war nine fell in battle. Two died later from the effects of the war. One, while still at the front, committed suicide. Four lived on. I am one of the four.

It was not of my doing.

We were all sons of 'good families,' of the prosperous *bourgeoisie*. Our parents belonged to the upper middle class. We were destined for a university education, for the leading professions of a practical or intellectual kind. We had grown up in a period of peace, in a civilization, a cultural consciousness which seemed deeply rooted and immutable. But the more gifted among us did not believe in this peace and were uneasy in its security. We instinctively felt a lack, a disillusion, a fundamental flaw in the construction of our world, the façade of which seemed to be so firmly joined together. There was a falseness, a weakness, in the knowledge and faith with which we were being equipped for life. We revolted against this, out of youthful unrest, out of presentiment, out of tradition. For the spirit of the *bourgeoisie* was born of revolt. It was fathered by the Encyclopedists, the



instigators of the French Revolution. Their impetus was doubt; their ideal, freedom.

We cried "Freedom!" when the war broke out, the while we threw ourselves into the strait-jacket of the Prussian uniform. It sounds absurd, perhaps even childish. But young men will understand what I mean.

The war suddenly freed us from the compulsions of school, home, family life, the things that seemed all too familiar and outworn and dull. We had been turned overnight into men faced with danger, adventure, and life in the raw. The threat of early death seemed slight to us, and we burned with enthusiasm as we sang Schiller's words:

Take your life and throw it in,  
Or never hope your life to win. . . .

We cried "Freedom!" and meant it in a primitive, nationalistic sense. Our people was to be freed from the pressure of world enmity, was to conquer the independence it needed to develop its powers. And we whispered "Freedom!" in the barracks and tents of our training camps, and we meant by it that when we came back we should make our own Germany, to correspond with our ideas, our spirit, our imagination. We, who now serve and fight, will be masters of our future.

Those who went into the field at that time from Germany, France and England were really the future of a world. They were the flower of Europe. They were mown down, destroyed.

Four out of sixteen of us were left, and that was a high average.

One of the four recently wrote to me.

The letter came from Holland and was sent at Christmas-time, but it travelled all over America in search of me. I have not seen the writer for twenty years. When he wrote he, a



former German officer and member of a devoutly religious family, was the leader of a conservative anti-Hitler movement in Amsterdam. Where he is to-day heaven only knows. I hope he is not in the hell of a concentration camp.

The letter was a reminder of Christmas 1914, which we spent together at the front in France.

He wrote:

I see a small, overcrowded section in a troop transport train, rumbling along from one sector of the front to another. The rifles are stacked in a corner, the men are jammed in together on the benches with their packs of equipment. In the middle of the compartment gleams a tiny Christmas-tree, and throughout the crowd there is an atmosphere of solemnity, tinged with a slight feeling of homesickness to which, of course, no one would admit. They are all young soldiers, and suddenly the youngest of them all bursts out with a Christmas speech, prompted by his inmost feelings. I have never felt myself in such a lofty mood as then. There never was so beautiful a speech. No speech was ever as fine again. Why?

Now it comes back to me that it was I who made that speech, a slim young fanatic of seventeen.

What can I have said?

I no longer have the faintest notion.

But it was undoubtedly something tremendously patriotic, and it was just an unconscious expression of something which even to-day I cannot understand or explain. It came from an abundance of love towards the world, life, oneself, destiny . . .

For it is only what is born of love that can keep alive and awaken an echo or—a memory.

Yes, we went on to the field of battle like young lovers, and, like them, we had no conception of what lay before us.

All our preconceived ideas of war, and even of life, were



drawn from the realm of books, romanticism, literature, heroic transfiguration, and mostly from catchwords.

Comradeship. Courage. Heroism. Generosity. Fame. Honour. Victory. Home-coming.

Like young lovers who do not know the reality of love, its lust for power, its cruelty and magnificence—and who are too hasty to search out the hidden fruit, and who break their teeth on the hard shell—so were we who rushed into war under the impression that it was an intoxicating and noble adventure. We were wild, exalted, uninhibited, full of appetite and awkwardness. And again, like lovers, we were full of ourselves, hypnotized by conceit.

I remember a non-commissioned officer by the name of Hess, who had in his campaign equipment a pair of marvelous, extra-fine patent-leather riding-boots, which he carried everywhere but never wore. He preferred to go about in the worn-out regulation army boots and let the melted snow seep through the holes in them rather than soil the new patent-leather boots which he was careful to polish every day. For they were to be used on the day of the victory parade through his own garrison home town. “My!” he used to say, “but the girls will crane their necks!”

He cleaned and polished his parade boots until one day they carried him off on a stretcher with both feet crushed, and even when the rest of us, who were luckier, came home the girls did not crane their necks to see either our riding-boots or the medals on our chests. They had long since looked about and found more sensible husbands, who had known enough to stay at home and feather their nests.

And we did not even resent it.

For we were graduates now of a school of reality, where we had been taught one thing above all—that man is made of clay.



Probably it was written in the Bible, but we had to learn it in practice.

Thank God for that lesson.

### § 3

The short period of training flew by. It was a difficult time, but so very full of new and unfamiliar things that we did not take it too hard. We soon grew accustomed to sleeping in a row on sacks of straw, in one room with forty other snoring men whose exudations and habits were not of the most refined. It was all part of it. We were somehow proud of the little sacrifices we had to make, the little unpleasantnesses we had to put up with. It was only a preparation for the great unknown, conclusive thing which was to come, which we awaited feverishly as one does a wedding. Even a formerly sheltered son of substantial citizens was proud now not to have the exemptions of the privileged caste of 'one-year volunteers,' as in peace-time, but to go through the same dirty business as any blacksmith, farm boy, or joiner's apprentice. Although we were still in a state of romantic transfiguration, this was the beginning of the complete dissolution of the caste spirit, a process which has not ceased since then to pervade the world, and which will continue to do so until human society is entirely reconstituted. And so, all unconsciously, our youthful detachments were swept into the barracks, into a revolutionary phase the power of which carried us along like a thunderstorm or a tidal wave. Actually we were still in a state of constant celebration, and we sang even when we were half dead from the strenuousness of our training and were staggering back to the barracks.

The drudgery and abuse heaped on us by certain of the corporals was taken more in a spirit of humour than despair.



Many a Prussian non-commissioned officer was already an embryo Nazi: the little fellow to whom is given unlimited power over his fellow-men, who abuses it all the more when he senses that his victims are possessed of social or human superiority. An intelligent face, cared-for hands, an educated way of speech, is sufficient to drive him mad. But we did not take these pocket Cæsars too seriously. We were determined to show them that they could not down us. Out at the front there were men who had to stand showers of bullets, and we too should soon be having our baptism of fire. Why should we be perturbed by the fussing of an excited stationmaster? . . .

We nicknamed our forage-master, who taught us riding and supervised our stable work, the Llama, because of his long, scrawny neck, his squeaky voice, and his eternal spitting. He would look at us for a long time with an absentminded expression, and we dared not move a muscle of our faces; then he would suddenly let out an almost incomprehensible command, which had to be executed with lightning speed unless we were prepared to wait for a palpable reinforcement of the order. He had it in for me especially, because I could not keep from grinning when he gave me one of his glassy stares. I had, according to him, no jot of seriousness in my whole make-up. But that was something that other schoolmasters had said to me so often that I myself believed it was true.

As soon as he noted that I enjoyed riding and that I had some knack for it he gave me the worst buckner in the whole regiment, a horse which bounced its rider like a feather ball in the air whenever it trotted. The beast was called Saul, and since then that name has always had malevolent implications for me. Saul was so bony that he made you feel as though you were sitting on a mound of crushed stone. He laid back his ears and produced shrill and malicious sounds. He kicked, he bit, and he would, without warning, suddenly break away



from the riding ring. We rode bareback, and whenever I was able to stick on him in spite of everything, the Llama would crack his long whip at Saul's heels until he did succeed in making me bite the dust. That I still grinned put him into a white heat of rage.

He made us stand for hours rigidly at attention behind the horses and catch their droppings with our cupped hands, in order to save fresh straw, and meantime he lectured us on cleanliness. He had an inexhaustible supply of such and worse jokes.

But these barrack-room tyrants of the 'good old days' had one so-called human trait—they were open to bribery. And they drank. Over a keg of beer or a bottle of wine you could come to some sort of intellectual terms with them, and at such times they liked to show, in a convivial way, that they too were human beings, only to turn abruptly back into supermen, terrifying fiends.

It was summer-time, it was hot, and on our free evenings we sat in wine- or beer-gardens, sang, got drunk, and waved to the girls who strolled in pairs along the village streets. In these days of intensified masculinity and the massing of such numbers of men these girls were in a state of perpetual excitement and willingness. On Sundays we sat in a little café where two pretty sisters were waitresses. I can still clearly remember how one of them, little Josephine, wore a snug-fitting white silk blouse which was always somewhat damp under her arms, and how we tried to outsit one another in order to be the last man and have the chance to accompany her home.

We had our little troubles and adventures, with polishing buttons, sleeping past reveille, secret excursions at night, happiness and jealousy, never giving a thought to the fact that we were playing on the edge of a mortal precipice into whose hellish depths we were inevitably being drawn. For one of



the most remarkable and amazing things about human nature is its illusion about unending life, the infinite continuation of a life which is ceaselessly threatened by death. In a dug-out, under shellfire, three minutes before they die two such human beings will argue about the proper way to make pancakes. I am not sure: is this a lack of imagination or the highest form of imaginative power? In any case, it is the only power which enables us to bear life and defy its dangers; whoever loses it has lost the equilibrium which holds him upright, and he crashes into that world of shadows where suicide lurks, or insanity.

Yes, there was something insane, something suicidal, in the fanaticism with which we forced our way into the zone of danger, but it was balanced by the primitive human hope to be the one who will get through, who will survive. Our aspirations too, which until then had been broader but less clear and more inchoate, were compressed now into this one focal point. From the time I was thirteen and during the whole of my schooldays I had imagined that I wanted to be a writer, a playwright, an artist, in spite of the fact that I came from a normal, solidly *bourgeois* family. Now that seemed like a pretty silly ambition. Of all my reveries only the desire for adventure remained, and that was intensified through the rush towards active manliness. When the war is over, I thought, I shall go out to the colonies, to Africa or Samoa or some freshly conquered territory to raise cattle, plant cotton, wear a large hat, and gallop over the prairies. That I might rot away in a common grave was an eventuality with which I barely reckoned, although it was the most probable. And when it was suddenly announced, one evening at roll-call, that twenty men were wanted for replacement at the front—who would volunteer?—we all rushed forward like savages, trying to push each other back, or away, and get there first. . . .



And then one day it happened. They issued to me a grey campaign uniform, arms, and ammunition. The next morning at four a great transport train of reinforcements was to leave for the Western Front. My parents rode over to the little garrison town to see me on that last evening which we were allowed to have free. We dined in the best restaurant; they ordered everything that was good and most expensive. They were very brave, and I tried to cheer them up with funny stories. But I had a lump in my throat which kept me from relishing the excellent food to the fullest extent. Don't get sentimental, I kept thinking, but once when I went out to the cloakroom I looked back and saw them bent over the table, and I had a hard struggle to keep from sobbing. Then I took them gallantly back to their hotel to bed—there was a girl waiting for me at the corner. Next morning, when we marched through the grey dawn to the station, she threw flowers down to me from an overhanging window. We sang till the very horses shied. The regiment band played the *Torgauer March* so that it went into the marrow of our bones, and we thought we were absolutely heroic. The whole transport train was full of song and yells as the wheels shuddered and began to turn.

That was 1914, in the first year of the war. Twenty-four hours later, exhausted from lack of sleep and from being shaken to pieces, we became aware of a strange and continuous sound of muffled thunder. It made the windowpanes in our train rattle slightly. We tried to look unconcerned. But we did not sing any more.

#### § 4

The first part of our time at the front was pure purgatory—not because of the danger or the horrors, but because it was entirely different from what we had imagined. And even



in the latter years of the war the things that were hardest to bear were monotony, dullness, the unromantic, mechanical, prosaic quality of the whole undertaking, into which were injected terror, death, and anguish. It was much like punching a time-clock in an unending process of manufacture. But the hardest of all to bear, in the beginning, was being a common man who just had to do his anonymous, coarse, dirty work, and not being a young hero such as we had dreamed we should.

I have a distinct memory of that grey, rainy, and chill afternoon when we, a reinforcement squad of some ten men, marched to our assignment under the guidance of an old front-line soldier, through the ruins of Roye, a town in Northern France which was being shelled. We marched quietly through the streets covered with filth and wreckage, and at a cross-roads we suddenly saw a strange grey bundle lying beside an overturned cart. It looked like a sack or a pile of rags. It was a dead soldier. We could tell that, as we came nearer, because of the two legs stretched stiffly out like two wooden stakes. Our guide did not even look at him. He knew that the burial squad would be coming along to remove the body. It was no concern of ours.

Suddenly something whizzed through the air as though it were aimed straight at us, each one of us, and almost in the same instant a sharp bursting noise seared our nerves. Our leader did not even wince. "Over a hundred yards away," was all he said, and went on his way. It gave you such a funny feeling in your inside. It was like the griping sensation in the intestines which comes from a cold. We would not have admitted to being afraid for anything in the world. And we should have kept right on even with our blue noses and chattering teeth if our guide had not suddenly thrown himself down in the mud. "Here it comes," he said, pressing



himself into the earth, while all around us it whizzed, howled, crashed, until we could not tell one noise from another. "Those are the rattlers," by which he meant the French 75's, the ones which, when aimed at cross-roads, fell within an inch of their target. We rushed, stumbled, stampeded blindly behind our leader into the first cellar we could find. For the sake of haste I threw aside my heavy pack and my long, carefully rolled overcoat. When we ventured out later, in the falling twilight, my heavy pack was still there. But not the overcoat.

I was thoroughly upset. My whole concept of the world crashed about my ears. For my overcoat had not been stolen by an enemy—but by a comrade.

It was one of the new, warmly lined, beautiful overcoats with which the replacement troops were supplied while the old soldiers were still going about in their light and often ragged summer outfit. Nevertheless, I could not grasp how it was that at the front, in the face of the enemy, men could rob each other. But I was just a child; more than that, I was the child of a good family.

The next day we had to march for eight hours up to our ultimate destination. It poured rain, and I was cold as a dog. When I went to my superior officer to ask for another overcoat, since mine had been stolen, I had another disillusionment.

"You pitiful, broken-down fragment of an incomplete human," said the great man to me, "why did you come out here to be a burden to us if you aren't capable of even watching your own overcoat? Do we have to supply a cloakroom girl to check your clothes for you each time you crawl into a rat-hole?"

I continued to freeze, and stuffed newspapers under my already threadbare tunic.



And then began an infernal, a beastly period for me. We were a light munitions column which lay in constant readiness behind the lines, prepared whenever necessary to take fresh ammunition up to the front lines. We had bad quarters, poor horses, and intolerable duties, which were punctuated by nights of vigil. And I was the youngest in our platoon, which meant I had all the dirty work to do which was shunned by the others, from washing the metal dishes and utensils smeared with cold grease and carrying heavy pails of water to washing cars in freezing weather and cleaning out the latrines. When we came back from a journey through an area being shelled, and the others could instantly fling themselves down on the straw to snore, I had to wrestle with the sickening, sooty, smoky stove and see that the place was kept warm. Incidentally, I had no idea of how to go about it. Every practical trick and detail, which were familiar to any young peasant or ditcher from childhood, had to be learned by me at the cost of tremendous effort and ridiculous awkwardness. I cursed my parental home, where a soft-footed servant girl made the early morning fires while we still lay in bed and through our delicious drowsiness were at most only vaguely aware of the first crackling sound of the burning wood. Now day and night I had crackling wood on my brain, due to overwork and despair. For none of the 'old ones,' the comrades, would raise a finger to help us. On the contrary, they made fun of us, distrusted our abilities, scorned our helplessness, and had no use for us. None of us had expected that. We had thought they would receive us with open arms, we who had not been compelled to come, but had insisted on sharing their dangers and hard life. We had volunteered to come, to help, to fight beside them. . . .

But now I felt that I had been delivered into the hands of enemies who were much worse than the shell-spewing enemy



across the lines. Except for our corporal, a good-natured, pious peasant by the name of Gaydul, who sometimes helped me curry the horses, they were all a bunch of malevolent, cruel devils. The worst of all was the man who shared my bunk and stall. He bore the Christian name of Schorsch: in ordinary life he was a brewery lorry driver from Babenhausen, and he had the physique, shoulders, and fists of a giant in a fairy tale. I shall never forget the repulsive grin on the fellow's face when I tried to make a fire with wet wood or burned my fingers in taking the coffee-pot off an improvised grate. He would puff calmly away at his pipe while I, half dead from work, gasped under the load of a two-hundredweight bag I had to take to the stables. He seemed to delight in his amusement over the fact that I was ignorant of the technique by which a heavy weight of that sort can be properly and lightly carried on the shoulders. It never occurred to him to give me a bit of helpful advice. If I passed him and he chanced to have an axe or any other heavy object at hand he would let it drop, with perfect accuracy of aim, on my feet. "Can't you look where you're going?" he would say. I hated that man.

One evening we came back from a dangerous delivery of munitions. On that day I had had my first experience of seeing a shell tear away the face of the man next to me. That face was turned into a bloody mess, like nothing human, and yet it never stopped screaming. I still had those screams in my ears and bloodstains on my clothes. Then I was unlucky enough, either through inadvertence or awkwardness, to upset Schorsch's tin coffee cup. We had very little coffee, and we were all chilled through, and Schorsch had set his aside for a moment to cool before taking the first sip. He was speechless with rage. Then he slowly raised his gigantic arm and struck me full in the face with his bare, brute fist.



To be hit in the face with a bare fist has nothing in common with human dignity. It is the lowest thing that can happen to you. That evening it simply maddened me. I was bereft of all my senses. I became wild. I had no desire left to go on living. I hurled myself on Schorsch—although it was as foolish as for a young rooster to hurl himself at an ox—and began blindly to batter him. I could have killed him. I bit him. I admit that that was not manly, but it was all I could do, and he felt it.

And when Schorsch stood back from me for an instant, presumably to give me a knockout blow, I picked up the first log of wood I could grab from the floor and brought it down on his head. The impact made the log jump out of my hand and strike my own shoulder, which probably caused me more pain than I had been able to inflict on Schorsch's brazen skull. But a remarkable change now came over Schorsch's face. I had fallen forward, and he could have finished me off with a single blow. But he did not strike. In his bloodshot eyes there was an almost friendly expression mixed with half-surprised admiration. He let his arm drop and grinned slightly. Then he picked up the ladle and scooped a little coffee out of the bottom of the pot.

"Drink this," he said, "and put some snow on your nose."

That was the first decent piece of advice he had ever given me. I followed it, and the bleeding soon stopped. From that day Schorsch was my friend. And I his.

I remember how once he brought my mail to me, out to an advanced post, because he knew I was waiting for a letter. It took him three hours to crawl the last fifty yards under a raking fire. (But the letter I was waiting for was not with the others.) And once I lost a whole day of my short leave at home in order to take a copper ring made from a shell to Schorsch's wife in Babenhausen. He had whiled away the



long nights in the trenches by engraving on it, "In memory of the campaign 1914-15." Not much remains of Schorsch beyond that ring and this memory of him. When we buried what a direct hit had left of him my mouth was salty with tears. I swallowed. That was just Schorsch, and I could tell about dozens, hundreds, of others like him. But I do not know whether anyone in the world would find it as interesting, or as touching, as I do.

## § 5

The cruelty of children and animals can be touching, because it is unconscious. There was a shade of something akin to that in our relations to each other at the front. My God, when I think how we tortured Joseph ("Jupp") Bischof, a middle-aged glazier from Aix-la-Chapelle, who had married on the eve of the war and was so wrapped up in his young wife that he could never stop talking about her. He naturally provoked our teasing with his eternal chatter, and he must have known what he was doing when he continually regaled a dugout full of youngsters, feasting on happy memories of their own first love affairs, with how beautiful his wife's legs were, or how she looked in a nightgown, or how she giggled when he tickled her neck with his moustache, and so on. But we simply could not restrain him, and perhaps the talking made the abstinence easier for him to bear. It drove us wild, and roused all our satiric and wicked instincts, especially as Jupp whenever he spoke of her, instead of calling her 'my wife,' used the silly term 'my little woman,' and said it in a childishly amorous tone.

The 'little woman' was soon on every tongue, and there was not a single man of us who did not use his free time to think up scurvy jokes to crack at her expense, all of them



on the theme of doubt thrown on her conjugal fidelity. To the hapless Jupp we painted pictures of the towns at home overflowing with young unmarried officers, of the boredom of a pretty young wife left all alone, of the various physiological and chemical processes that naturally ally themselves with boredom, and described with diabolical detail the inevitable, and mathematically certain, results thereof. We carried things so far that Jupp would rage round the dugout like a crazy man, an uncocked pistol in his hand to shoot, since he could not get at the intangible, invisible destroyer of his marital bliss, the first one of us he could reach. We revenged ourselves for the natural jealousy we felt for his new happiness by winking at each other and promising that when we had leave we would look up the little woman and take all kinds of greetings from him and present them with appropriate tenderness. The little woman was our toy, the product of our dreams. The more cruelly Jupp suffered on her account and fretted for her, the greater was our secret thrill. No wonder that he cursed the war even harder than the rest of us were soon doing and that he prayed for a nice, healable wound (we called them home shots) and that he became almost hysterical as his time to go on leave drew nearer; it augured ill for the happy conclusion of his delayed honeymoon.

Of course he announced, as he was leaving, that he would not be coming back to us; he threatened to desert, to maim himself, or to pretend to go temporarily insane. But when his leave of ten days or two weeks was up back he came, somewhat calmer, somewhat less talkative, and somewhat more unhappy. He was a grand soldier. I had him for a year and a half in my telephone unit, and on more than one occasion we sweated blood together to restore a line of communication in the middle of a battle. Then, during the battle of the Somme, he did not come back to me from a circuit patrol through heavily shelled



trenches, and I went out to look for him with another telephone man, a Jew by the name of Solly Stern, with whom Jupp was on terms of passionate disagreement.

We discovered him lying helpless in a fresh shell-hole and succeeded in binding up his leg before he bled to death. We carried his heavy weight to the ambulance corps and went down on our knees to the staff surgeon to beg some morphine for him. A week later we went to the field hospital to see him. Jupp was very pale, but he had a beatific expression on his face. They had cut off his leg, but he did not even mourn its loss. "What do I care about that old leg?" was his first remark in greeting us. "Now I can go home to my little woman and need never leave again. . . ." And with that he started off on one of his old unbearable rigmaroles about the charms of his 'little woman' until we were almost tempted to overwhelm him, in spite of his helpless condition, with a barrage of teasing. . . .

But we refrained. For it so happened that a new man from Jupp's home town had just joined our battery. He knew the little woman and had told us that she had indeed succumbed to the very temptations we had imagined and had been unfaithful to Jupp with a sergeant bugler.

We feared terrible consequences on his return home. We worried as much as if he were being exposed to drum-fire. After he was invalided home we hardly dared to open a newspaper, we dreaded so to find the report of a *crime passionnel*.

But nothing of the kind occurred.

Whatever happened between those two I do not know, but I imagine that it was something quite simple, very human, and rather chivalrous. Most of the many marital tragedies during the war were solved in a better way than most people had thought possible, largely on a basis of common need, of mutual help, and of understanding.



The little woman gave up her sergeant bugler and came back to Jupp with his wooden leg, who forgave her. A year later we had the notice of a christening.

And fifteen years later I happened to be in Aix-la-Chapelle on a lecture tour. That Jupp and the little woman lived there was a fact I had quite forgotten. But among the letters waiting for me at my hotel was a card from him. He had noticed my name in the paper and wanted to see me again. The next day I went to call.

Jupp danced round for joy on his wooden leg, and he had prepared a whole array of bottles for the two of us to consume together. When I inquired about the little woman he made a casual gesture with his hand and said, "She is busy out in the kitchen."

Later, at a meal, she appeared.

She had become a plumpish, comfortable-looking middle-class woman, and there was nothing about her to remind me that once upon a time she had been the beautiful Helen of an imaginary Trojan War. Jupp paid little heed to her presence and waited impatiently until she had left the room again and he could talk about old times with me. They seemed rosy to him and wonderful, almost the 'happiest days' of his life. And we, the comrades of those days, were all his friends, his angels. He no longer remembered how fiendishly we had tormented him. "Yes," he sighed, and said somewhat tipsily, "Those were the days!"

And I realized that he did not remember anything as it actually happened, not anything; he only knew how, in retrospect, he had wanted it to be.

What a strange thing recollection is! I am not speaking now of memory, which is more a personal gift or quality and is akin to the discipline of logic. I am speaking rather of that



integration of happenings, impressions, and fantasies, of inner and outer reflexes, mental and spiritual vibrations, the lees from the abundance of life and the never-ending stream of its images. Yet it becomes a recollection only when an intellectual bond links it together, just as a variety of tones becomes a melody only when a creative spirit has related them to one another. Recollection is the melody which we fashion for ourselves out of the chromatic scales of our experiences. A great many people have memory, but few the power of *recollection*. And to him who possesses it it is an inalienable beloved. No, it is a faithful wanton. She has many lovers, and to each she appears what he desires her to be, and to each who loves her she is the only love.

Even I do not know whether I remember the war, the last war, as it really was. Indeed, I should be bored if I were obliged to recall it in all its reality, to count up all that happened in those four endless years and try to find any development there. What does remain and what recollection conjures up is something quite concrete and living, like a fruit, like a body, like a stretch of overgrown landscape into which the scars of love and hate, like peaks and precipices, have chiselled themselves.

Yet the innermost secret of love and hate we are compelled to guard until doomsday.

It occurs to me that I nourished a consuming hatred for one officer, and it was not only because he tortured his subordinates and was stupid and cowardly; it was also because I hated his voice, his way of holding himself, his manner of speech, everything about him. And I must confess that I still hate him to this day.

He came from a wealthy North German family. He was spoiled. He was capricious. He was arrogant. He was lack-



ing in all culture either in its deepest or even its most primitive sense. He was a living proof of the fact that culture has nothing to do with how much a man learns or how well he tends his fingernails. This lieutenant had nails like tender young rose petals, although he was engaged in a military campaign. And as a baby some one had presented him with Wagner's *Ring*, so he whistled the leading airs from it until we were sick of them. He had read everything he should, and his ancestral home was undoubtedly full of fine family silver and solid traditions. But he was completely without culture. He had no tact, no respect, and no sense of decency.

One of our jobs in those days, when I was still a non-commissioned officer and in charge of the telephone squad, was to lay a cable ten feet below the ground. We had to work in a hard limestone soil and often under the heaviest kind of fire. We fought every foot of the way under pressure of mortal fear, and we suffered many losses. When the firing stopped our elegant gentleman would emerge from his bomb-proof dugout, choose some spot at random, and oblige us to dig up the cable we had laid with such effort. He would then take a tape-measure from his pocket and gauge the depth of the trench. "This lacks two inches of the required depth," he would say. "You swine have cheated on it by two inches. The whole cable must be dug up and relaid."

This elegant caprice cost us our night's rest after gruelling days, and even cost the life of one of our best men. I freely admit that I longed to see that officer die. Yet his mere existence drove me to the only really heroic action for which I can give myself credit during the whole war. Once in the officers' mess, in the presence of the whole staff, I threw a glass of wine in his face, although I was still only a candidate for a commission and still his subordinate. I was prepared for



the most dire consequences—demotion, loss of freedom, and perhaps worse. For “insubordination in the face of the enemy” can be punished by shooting. It was due only to his vanity that nothing of the sort occurred. He expunged from the record a matter which was as uncomfortable for him as it might have been catastrophic for me. But I had acted without thinking about the consequences, because I could not stand his silly chatter or the impertinent way in which he held his cigarette out for me dutifully to light. My act, I say it with pride, was that of a hero. Anyone familiar with military matters will understand what I mean. And it was done out of hatred.

On the other hand, I was really fond of Vallentin Stahl, a ruffian and a vagabond, with his fourteen prison sentences and his unmitigated immorality. I could not keep from loving him. He was not a fine human being, and he was by no means a hero. He had an aversion to danger and was prejudiced against death. As soon as we were moved into a perilous position or a battle he knew how to produce a recurrence of his old gonorrhœa, or at least its symptoms, which would cause him to be immediately dispatched to the nearest base hospital. As soon as the battle was over and we were stationed in a quieter sector he would reappear and brazenly go on thieving. But he never stole from his friends. If you won his affection you could confide your money to him without even counting it. He had a fondness for stealing, and he did not mind giving his booty away again at once.

When I ran across him by accident after the war, in a fair in Baden where he was operating a merry-go-round, we fell into each other's arms and wept for joy. He had a heathen, antique way of showing his friendship: he immediately sent for his *fiancée*, a charming little creature who worked in Birkeneder's shooting-gallery, and hinted that she might sleep



with me. But, remembering some of his old tricks, I preferred to decline the invitation, and he was seriously offended. It took all my tact to get him over it and not to have his feelings really hurt.

For he had an over-ticklish sense of honour.

## § 6

In recent years, when we made our home in Austria, and I sometimes went to London from Vienna on that magnificent express train with sleeping cars through to Calais, I was usually sitting at breakfast when we passed along a certain railway embankment in Northern France . . . or if two of us were travelling together I should be stretching myself out in my berth and trying to decide whether to ring for breakfast or to sleep a little longer. . . .

Then my eyes would wander out of the window to a station sign—which always sent a secret thrill through me—and on into the landscape flashing by. There were little woods, peasant houses, church steeples, and cultivated fields, but I had known it when it was like a landscape on the moon, completely desolate and empty, without a tree, without a bush, without a sign of a single human habitation, pocked with shell-craters, furrowed with trenches, veiled with rusty strands of barbed wire, and the whole region smothered in a yellowish, sulphurous haze. That was the aspect of war. And on top of that railway embankment along which the train had just glided so smoothly while the waiter was passing me some fresh French rolls, exactly at this spot between Laon and Péronne, near Chaulnes, when I was nineteen I lay for a whole night on my stomach, my rifle in my hand, and defended the embankment against the advancing French forces. Had they known that we were only a handful of soldiers who were run-



ning out of ammunition or else had been shot to pieces, that we were only a few desperate and half-starved outposts on the railway embankment, they could have caught us like so many young rabbits. . . . But they did not know. They thought that behind the embankment there was still a considerable force. They were quite near—we could hear them talking and calling loudly to each other as they hauled their machine-guns up—and the sounds they made were strange and terrifying to us. They came from the Senegalese, the black French reinforcements, of whom it was said they made no prisoners, for as soon as they captured one they slit him open. . . . Later I saw and came to know some of these Senegalese sharpshooters in Mainz, with the Army of Occupation, and I could not imagine how these harmless, childlike fellows who loved to laugh and throw dice could be the same ones we had feared as though they were devils. . . . But you never know what a man is capable of, be he white or black. Most murderers are personally quite agreeable, if they are not at the moment engaged in murdering you. And it is of little avail to find out later that they did not mean to do anything reprehensible.

During that night I may have killed some of the Senegalese. I did not mean to do anything bad. I was afraid. Yet I had been at the front for two years by then. I knew that courage was nothing more than controlled, repressed fear. If you do not know fear you are not brave, but just stupid. And we, at the front, knew that you cannot rid yourself of fear; it always comes back like sweat or digestion, and you simply evolve a technique of dealing with it, which means that in spite of terror you continue to function with precision and keep your head. In return for that, your superior technique in handling your fear, you receive medals and laudatory mention in dispatches.

I can still remember how eternally long that night lasted.



It was already late summer; it was the 4th of September, 1916. It was frosty and damp. On the railway embankment there were no rails, only some crushed ballast into which we tried to press our icy, stiff bodies. As soon as I heard a noise or saw the glimmer of a light I fired point-blank in that direction. My heart was pounding, but my hands were steady. I kept counting my remaining cartridges, but I could not keep the count. The nearest man lay seventy feet away; we could not see anything of each other. I was alone. Towards morning I had even lost my fear. All I could still feel was a horrible, pressing necessity to relieve myself, which I could not quiet, and a deadly, paralysing, annihilating sense of fatigue. For this night had followed a whole week of unbroken heavy shelling, gas attacks, shortage of rations, exertions of all kinds, and lack of sleep. When day began to break—and with the coming of light our fate appeared to be sealed—I no longer cared what happened. I crawled down the embankment and did what I had to do. Then I crawled up again and my knees could scarcely bear my weight. I lay on my face and from time to time I mechanically raised my rifle, but my instinct of self-preservation was moribund. All I wanted was to sleep, to quit, to snuff out the lights.

Then, before the sun rose, came reinforcements, help, relief. They were infantrymen from Schlesien, who had been brought up from some rear position and thrown into the front where there was a break. There were young fellows and also some older men among them from the Home Guard. For their march to the front they had been issued a ration of brandy, and as they had not had time to make coffee they took it on an empty stomach. Many of them had red, bloated faces and appeared to be roaring drunk. They swarmed forward; their grey uncouth figures loomed in a far-flung line out of a ground mist, between shell-holes, vaulting over trenches,



staggering, stumbling, but unimpeded. We, a handful of frozen derelicts, simply rolled down the embankment and crawled towards our deliverers on our bellies, telling them by means of gestures and low calls where the enemy was.

Then a command rang out, and they began to run forward, straight for the embankment, into the enemy. Some of them shouted hoarsely, others gritted their teeth, a few brandished their bayonets and whooped with overwrought excitement and alcohol, as they all surged forward in the tempo of a storming party which looked so damnably like a flight . . . and from beyond came the barking of the machine-guns, gently, almost timidly at first, then swelling to a furious, rhythmic chorus.

We knew that some of them would be falling stiffly on their faces to the ground. That others would spin round on their feet before falling. Still others would run on and on aimlessly. We no longer looked round. We staggered on and on back to some place where we found rest.

Three days later our battery, or rather what was left of it, was quartered at a base behind the lines to wait for fresh munitions and reinforcements. We washed, we slept in beds, we saw women in the streets, we sat in the canteen at night and drank our pay. Then we began to sing again. But not the patriotic songs of the first days of the war; these were made-up songs, which had arisen in the course of time in various parts of the Army, in which we burlesqued our own experiences or well-known personalities. The undertone of these songs was gallows humour; outsiders would have found them cynical. I never heard a pompous or loudmouthed expression, even when a man was leaving a dugout to risk his life for another. We used only foul language or invectives. That was more honest and also more unpretending.



I noticed then, in the short respite after the worst days in the battle of the Somme, how quickly a man forgets. How fortunate that is and what a self-preserved—that quick oblivion!

In the midst of the sad noise we were making and of the excitement of the physical sensation of being alive and breathing and safe, I recalled the battle quite distinctly as an experience of terrible loneliness. It was always thus in decisive moments—a man was alone. In that night on the railway embankment. In that race, as I, dripping with sweat and breathless, tore straight over trenches to retrieve a stereotelescope from an abandoned position. Shells burst, like meteors crashing down from the sky, the earth spurted up, the air was all din, yet deathly still. No one was about. They had all crept away, hidden themselves. They were buried. One was alone, under the stars and in all eternity. I prayed as I ran, gasping without ceasing, “O God, do not forsake me—help me—do not leave me alone—I will do anything—believe anything—go to Mass, to confession, anything—only do not leave me alone. . . .”

I was soon a little ashamed at feeling so greatly in need of company. But the solitude was terrifying. It was worst of all in that abandoned dugout, into which I pushed my way through the half-demolished emergency exit. Only one man had remained behind, to guard the instruments; his name was Andrea, and he was a Westphalian miner with extraordinary, somewhat prophet-like light blue eyes, such as you find among members of certain religious sects. He was a Bible student, a total abstainer, and he scolded when we got drunk or cursed or told coarse stories. Up to an hour before we had been able to hear his voice over the telephone wire. Then everything was still, the lines were in shreds, and they had sent me out there. . . .



I called his name as I fumbled my way along the dark passage. I cried, I bellowed, "Andrea! Andrea!" My voice cracked in the stuffy hole which reeked of picric acid and sulphur. A direct hit had wrecked the main entrance. It was like pushing your way into a tomb. "Andrea!" I screamed, and deathly fear screamed with me. Outside the shells were shrieking. But inside it was incredibly, uncannily still.

As I tried to light a match my foot struck against some object. I stumbled. There was a strange sound, a rustle, then a squeak. And as my match went out the sharp, nasal tones of a Berlin popular song cut through the air. It was our gramophone, with which we had whiled away the time before the battle began. The needle was in place—the pressure from the explosion of shells had not budged it—but the blow from my boot had set it in motion, and now Claire Waldow's voice shrilled through this pestilential black burial vault:

Go on pouring, dearie, keep on drinking!  
Bottoms up! And stop your silly thinking!  
It's all alike for every one;  
The rotten show will soon be done. . . .

Andrea was dead. He lay wedged in among some crushed beams, and at first I was so horrified and bewildered that I could not find his body.

Later on we received some extraordinary and disturbed letters from his wife, who like him was a member of a biblical sect with spiritualist proclivities, and we too were upset by what she had to tell.

He had appeared to her, she wrote, and talked to her, promising to come back and converse with her at greater length. He had told her, at home in Westphalia, about the hour of his death. He had died entirely alone in an abandoned dugout. Quite alone and abandoned. No comrade had re-



mained with him. They had left him to die in his own grave; only God had been close to him.

These letters always ended with a flood of complaints and reproaches that we should have left her husband, solitary and alone, to die.

She *could not* have known the circumstances of his death in any so-called natural way. She had received no communication beyond the usual one. No one had written or told her anything.

How in heaven's name had she gained the knowledge of his lonely death?

Yet it was no more solitary than any other death or than our whole life out there. It is not just the hours of battle but the whole period of the war which has remained in my memory as one inhuman, monstrous stretch of solitude—even when I was surrounded with people and longed to be alone. Perhaps it was from this very thing, this sense of solitude, that one drew an inner power to preserve one's own heart in spite of everything.

And—save one's reason.

Towards the end, in 1917 and 1918, it was sometimes difficult to save one's reason. It was too much. Our nerves seemed atrophied, but in reality they were strained to breaking-point.

I became clairvoyant. It was most unpleasant. When we went into the line I knew who would be killed. Naturally I never told any of them. But unfortunately I was right in my premonitions and infallibly so.

It began when we were being transferred to Flanders, where the battle was raging. In the train, when I was dozing, a comrade called my name in a strangely hollow voice. I thought I saw him in the corridor, so I stood up and looked out. But in reality he was in a neighbouring compartment, sound



asleep, with his chin deep in his collar. In that instant I *knew*. The next day he was dead.

Thank heaven this painful faculty left me after the war.

But this enhanced sensitivity of the nerves, in the latter years of the war, reached into the realms of the soul and mind and found some equilibrium there, on that higher plane. I found myself overwhelmed with an immense, powerful, insatiable appetite for beauty, for greatness of thought, art, form, control, clarity—all this in the midst of my primitive animal existence between life and death.

I dragged bags and boxes of books along with me and kept losing them whenever we went into action. I turned to reading during every available hour, at my gun, on patrol duty, even on horseback. I studied the fundamental books on history of art, philosophy, religious teachings, the great social and economic theories. And I began to write again as I did in my schooldays: savage, chaotic poems, dramatic projects, short stories, essays.

But everything I did towards intellectual training started from this central standpoint; How was it that we came to this world catastrophe of civilization in the twentieth century? What social, intellectual, physical, or moral mistakes had brought this about? And where did the solution lie?

I did not find it then.

But I sometimes think that in those days we were a little closer to it than later on; in those last desperate years at the front, when we began to overcome the solitude of all human creatures by means of a great tragic love.

This world love remained amorphous and blurred in those days.

We were too young to cast it in a clear form and make it powerful. If ever we succeed in doing that then there will really be no more war.



## § 7

I went through the greater part of the campaign for three and a half years with that particular unit of the army which carried the descriptive nickname of the Corpse Circus. It was a so-called 'flying battery,' but in those days the word 'flying' was used in the figurative sense, although aerial dogfights were our daily entertainment and the bombers roared over our encampment at night. Being in a circus implied flying; we were a special formation used to resist storm attacks; we were particularly trained in shooting at short range, in barrage-firing and the support of infantry in action, so we 'flew,' like a travelling circus, from one sector of the front to another, wherever anything unusually infernal was going on and where they needed our type of specialists in the first line. We were naturally called a Corpse Circus because we were looked upon as itinerant corpses to whom a slight respite had been granted. We were equipped with various types of guns which were used only for our purposes—later they were used for direct firing on tanks. We had old-fashioned 9-centimetre barrel guns for barrage fire and new little 5.7 and 3.7 rapid-fire machine-guns. (At the very end we were given our first big, long-range naval guns, and that was when I learned how to take observations from balloons and aeroplanes.) Moreover, we had rifles, hand-grenades, and revolvers, in case of close combat. And we learned all the types of fighting there were in the last war, not to mention the knowledge of poison gas in its various uses and effects.

In all this time I was nearly always the youngest in our battery, even when I was an officer and an 'old warrior,' even when I was the sole commander of the troop from time to time. But I had matured tremendously since the day when my overcoat was stolen. Above all, I had grown close to the men



out of whom soldiers are made, for all my loneliness. Untold men were very near to me in those years; some of them I saw die, some lived on. I learned what a man is worth and what he is not worth. And I learned how to stand up to other men, and how to get along with them. In spite of this I felt a great aloofness between us, even a certain coolness, which was rarely broken by feelings of real friendship. Real attachment, real closeness, is something I have felt only with women. But in the war I learned to understand men and to win their confidence.

The four years went by; death was always there and remained as mysterious, as alien and incomprehensible as ever. There were many waxen faces to whom we could no longer speak and who no longer had anything in common with us. And yet it seemed as though we had known each other since the beginning of time. Once, during the spring offensive in March 1918, I came across a dead Englishman whose letter-case had fallen out of his pocket. I opened it and found a little coloured card with a printed message to which were added two lines in a child's handwriting:

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS  
*Kindest Thoughts and Best Wishes  
 For a Happy Christmas*  
 To : Bob  
 From : His Sister Dolly, with Love.

I looked long into the face of this young 'enemy,' and I can still remember it to-day. I could imagine, from his features, what his little sister Dolly looked like. I mourned for this Bob. I thought to myself, Why is he lying there, and not I?

Those are dangerous thoughts. When you begin that you cannot stand war much longer, for when your heart grows



heavy it pulls you down. The many dead weighed us down. We could hardly carry them with us any longer. There were the many seventeen-year-olds, boys of my own age on that New Year's Eve in 1915 in Lihons; they had to storm a cemetery which lay on high terrain. Why just on New Year's Eve? Some malicious tongues had it that the corps commander wanted a victory to report for the 1st of January. They were unable to capture the cemetery, the fire on their flanks mowed them down like grass, they got caught in the wire entanglements, and we could not even get them back; many of them cried "Mother!" in their last anguish. We could hear it in our trenches. They were still so very young. A woman once told me of a man who called out for his mother at the moment of the consummation of his love. That terrified me. It made me think of the dead at Lihons. Death, conception, life—who in the world has ever known those secret bourns?

The gathering numbers of the dead weighed on our backs in the long-drawn-out progress of the war. Those who were crushed under the wreckage of lonely dugouts. Those who floated in the waters of Flanders. Those who died in hospitals or along the way.

They became an army of fiends, demons, vampires, of whom we had to rid ourselves if we were not to be buried with them.

And we did rid ourselves of them.

Our un-lived lives burned in us like an open wound, which we had to close with all the healing properties of our blood.

Whom it does not kill it makes strong.

## § 8

My most intense experience of the whole war was a birth. It was quite near the beginning, during a raw, rainy March



night in 1915. We were marching towards Arras where an offensive was in progress. Late in the evening we came to a small village where we were to be quartered overnight. It was a poverty-stricken, muddy region. There were only some beet fields, a refinery, and the really miserable little hovels of the farmers. It happened in one of those hovels. She was a young girl, uncouth, with broad hips, full breasts, and the face of an animal. When we stamped into the hut with our sacks of straw to prepare our billets for the night she lay there in labour, and no one was helping her. For the father of her child was a German soldier. And it must have occurred in the very beginning of the war, when the Uhlans swept through the French villages. But in those days of the war such a thing was out of the ordinary and naturally aroused the anger of the French population, not against the Uhlan, who had long since vanished and who had anyhow done only what he could not restrain himself from doing, but against the girl who had given herself to the enemy. For there was no question of rape. It was due more to a trancelike state of excitement and giddy infatuation which made the young creature helpless against herself and her sudden impulse. Perhaps they both stammered confused words in their two languages to each other about eternal love and faithfulness, and perhaps they believed it. In short, her baby was now being born. And the only other person in the house was an aged woman who looked like a decayed lizard with the head of a hen; she sat in the corner, mumbling crossly, and paid not the slightest attention to the travail of the young woman.

So there was no alternative for us but to care for her ourselves. There were three of us: Weigel, an old miner who was married and had a vague notion of what to do, Schorsch, the brewery lorry driver with the huge hands, and I, a boy of barely eighteen. The ambulance man in our unit was by pro-



fession a Protestant theologian, and he was embarrassed almost to death. We had to do everything ourselves. And we did it, with all the awkwardness, ignorance, care, and tenderness of which men are capable.

Later we discovered that we did everything exactly wrong. Schorsch held her legs fast, as though he were shoeing a horse. Weigel gave her coffee to drink at inopportune moments, and all I really did was to hold her hand and let her claw me. In spite of it all the child was born, and both it and the mother survived. We washed it, wrapped it up, and listened to its first cries. And we cleaned up the old rags on which the young mother was lying. But the next morning she was already up. She put her child to her powerful breasts, she chopped wood, and when we went away she kissed me with her wet lips shaped like the nostrils of a horse.

That night, when I had to stand guard outside during the hours of her travail, I had the extraordinary sensation of being born myself, as though I were consciously going through something which once upon a time had happened to me. I saw and felt the monstrosity of the process, like a volcano, a cataract, and I realized that I myself had been hurled into this life in a geyser of blood.

And then I perceived something fundamental.

Women give their blood, shed their blood at the birth of their children and lose it in the revolving months.

Men are excluded from that dispensation, that natural law, from giving birth.

Their blood circulates within themselves and finds no outlet.

That is why men wage war.

That is also why the great creators come from the ranks of men.



## CHAPTER THREE

### *Even in Hell . . .*

DEAREST ELIZABETH,

You wrote me that you were somewhat shocked by certain details in Chapter Two. I myself was somewhat shocked by all these things, and others, too, that I have not put into words, which happened to me between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one. But I vow to you that I did not choose this time for my life. No one asked my preference when I was put into the world, or perhaps I should have chosen some century about which there would have been better and more decent things to say than about ours.

But which one? About what century is there really anything better to say?

"I am disgusted by this ink-spilling era!" inveighed young Schiller against his times, the times in which the most mellow French and noblest German were written, when the most beautiful castles were built, the most delicate miniatures painted, when the poorest farm boys (in return for English pounds) were sold by their princes like so much cattle and, at the other end of the scale, the most charming aristocrats were hanged on street lamps and the best heads fell under the guillotine.

Or are you thinking perhaps of the flowering of classic culture, the Age of Pericles? But even the world of Phidias and Plato had its Führer (the tanner, Adolf Cleon), its Gestapo (the sycophants), its Grand Fascist Council (the Thirty Tyrants), and was carried off to its death by the triumphant, clamorous masses.



Or should we perhaps wish ourselves back in the respectable, settled period of peace in which our parents grew up? Yet I know that it was crowded with so much dullness and narrowness, with so much pettiness and prejudice, that it was all but impossible to breathe in it.

Yet, after all, we ourselves have seen the faint lustre of a Periclean era and were a part of it in old Europe before its temporary eclipse. And since those days we have lived through so much 'World History' that we are in a position to know, down to its last detail, all that was low and despicable in every age. Inquisition, bans, list of proscripts, St Bartholomew tocsins, slavery, kidnapping, terror, lynch law—there is not a single manifestation of vileness in all history which we of to-day have not seen at close quarters; we know how it smells and how it tastes. For what is low and despicable always has existed and still exists in the world; it is a part of the material which we must shape, which we must master—evil fades from memory in time, and only the higher forms of life, even though they may be obscured for a while, are all that persist.

No, even if I could I should not exchange my place in time and space, no matter if to-day it again seems like nothing so much as a reserved seat on the end of a half-sawn-off branch. A man belongs to the time in which he lives. He grows into it like a plant which is intertwined with the elements through its roots, its fibres, its cells, its buds, and through its very existence it feeds and transforms those elements. But happiness and suffering, tragedy and high destiny, guilt and mercy, are of every time and are so much a part of every world-conscious life that through it their mysterious laws and inner rhythm can be fulfilled. Even in chaos the concept of beauty lives on. Even in hell love does not die.



## § 2

I knew a young Belgian girl, Angéline Meunier, who was made homeless in the last war when Louvain was destroyed. In those days she was still almost a child, but her hand had already been promised to an assistant postmaster, who was only waiting for a permanent appointment in order to marry, and with whom she would presumably have been bored to death.

Her Flemish relatives called her Engele, which in a South German mouth sounds very much like the word for a diminutive angel. Angéline de Louvain was the name she went by when I met her later on in a Brussels night club. . . . She was as blonde, as light-skinned, and as limpid-eyed as angels in a painting, and like them she undoubtedly had hidden within her a great and ardent heart. Her father was a Walloon, a Belgian jingo patriot; her mother was Flemish and of German origin. With the outbreak of war her father, who had a small business in Louvain, had to join the colours, and for four years nothing was heard of him; no one knew whether he was dead or alive. Her mother was killed in the bombardment of Louvain and the house where they had lived burned to the ground. The Germans marched in, martial law was declared, and Angela was orphaned and alone, for her *fiancé* had also left with the Belgian Army. Since she knew no one in Louvain to whom she could turn for refuge, she walked barefoot and empty-handed, just as she had fled from her bed, to her only relative, a married aunt on her mother's side, who had an inn in a small village in Flanders. But soon the Germans overtook her there too; the village was taken, the battle rolled westward, and the place where Angela lived with her relatives became a German base in the occupied zone.

The place was called Lindeken, probably because of its many



linden-, or lime-, trees; it was a tiny settlement consisting of only a handful of farmhouses, a church, several shops, and the inn already mentioned. The inhabitants were not badly off, for they ran their own farms, and even during the occupation most of them had a certain income from the produce of their fields and market gardens. Yet not far away, a few miles down the road, lay the little industrial town of Roselaere, with its unhealthy and sunless suburbs inhabited by pale, anæmic proletarians. This was where the great highways from Lange-marck and Ypres crossed and where the wind-bowed poplars were shredded by shrapnel and uprooted by shells. For this was the corner where in the autumn of 1914 the German advance was brought to a standstill and the two opposing fronts dug themselves in for years in the wet, rain-sodden earth.

Angela's aunt was called Rosine Wulverghem; she was a fat, coarse, rather slovenly woman such as one frequently finds as proprietors of Belgian or Northern French *estaminets*. The population soon took up the nicknames given her by the German soldiers, Orlog and La Guerre, both of which meant 'war' and were a sufficient indication of her temperament. Her husband was called Crooked Leopold, for he had a lame hip and was good for little except to haul the water which had to be carried from a near-by bucket well. For the most part he sat in a rocking-chair and mumbled to himself, for if he ever spoke out loud his wife or one of his daughters promptly shut him up. Aline and Gézine, whom the German soldiers had rechristened Sardine and Cantine, were coarse, powerfully built girls in their twenties who quarrelled together all day and then felt lonesome at night in their bedrooms on the ground floor. Since all healthy men between the ages of sixteen and sixty were either in the Army or interned, it was not long before some German warrior or other from the base



headquarters found his way through the never-locked windows. Even their mamma, the broad-hipped Rosine, had her little spring idylls, shared by a twirled moustache by the name of Roebig, a sergeant-major from the base. Yet all this was a deep, dark secret. Every one knew it, but no one was supposed to be privy to it, and should any guest be so imprudent as to infringe this rule of inviolate discretion by some pert remark, he was quick to feel the whole warlike brunt of the Wulverghem temperament, both mother's and daughters'.

Angela, the impoverished and unwelcome niece, was treated by the whole family as an unpaid servant on whom they unloaded every kind of heavy work, in return for which they grudgingly gave her food and a place to sleep in the barn, for the mother and daughters required the rooms in the house for their private lives.

Whereas no one paid any attention to the soldiers marching through on their way to the front—it really was not worth while, because you never knew whether any of them would come back—the Wulverghem *estaminet* was a fixed rallying-point of the small officials who had been able to secure one of the indispensable jobs at the base and who ‘knew their way about.’ These satraps and minor rulers of the regions behind the lines—the paymasters, the quartermaster-sergeants, the military police, all these little people who were mere subordinates at home, but who now were raised by the power of their rank to a position of fear-inspiring significance—they all passed their time pleasurably at the Plump Raisins, as they called the tavern in a playful variation on Rosine. If these men were in the humour to do it their position enabled them to grant certain little alleviations to the civilian population. On the other hand, they also possessed the well-tried means of pressure through chicanery, against which there was no appeal. Therefore they were correspondingly courted and enter-



tained. Officially only cider might be served, but on the sly there was calvados (apple brandy), potato brandy, and beer to be had. From near-by Roselaere, where the proletarian civilian population was on the verge of starvation and was barely kept alive by the Red Cross, women and girls came over occasionally to do a little business under Rosine Wulverghem's wing and, despite her strict outward show of morals, to arrange meetings with the clients of the tavern. In all this they cared less for the money involved than for the army bread, beans, bacon, or other foods which the soldiery still had, and, indeed, had in greater profusion at the base than at the front.

That Angela was beautiful in even more than the conventional sense of the term and notwithstanding the disadvantage of her clothing and position, was something which in no wise escaped the attention of the steady clients of the *estaminet*. Lieutenant Beckmann, the local commandant (he was a dull-witted cavalry officer from the Home Defence and a spineless tool in the hands of the Sergeant-Major Roebig, who "conducted affairs"), stuck his monocle in his eye when he saw her go by in her thin work dress, a basket of potatoes or laundry in her hand. For this was where the soldiers had their clothes washed, ironed, and mended, and all this was attended to by Angela in addition to her work in the fields. That was why every one knew her, although she was never present in the evenings, about which so much was whispered, when they laid the heavy wooden shutters on the windows of the *estaminet* and smothered the sound of the player piano under a quilt. But it happened frequently that when she was busy in the steaming laundry some hero from the base would evade the old lady Wulverghem, slip in quickly and shyly, sit down on a laundry chest, and awkwardly begin a halting conversation or offer her a piece of chocolate, which was the favourite and easiest opening move.



Yet it was not long before these visitors, whether shy or bold, gave up the attempt. Angela had a kind of cool amiability, a natural aloofness—yes, an even ladylike grace, which she used in ignoring or parrying remarks in a way baffling to the stalwart military men; it sobered or it hurt them. A girl like her ought to be pleased and grateful. They had their troubles back home with ‘ladies.’ Here things ought to be easier. So they approved of the strict but clear secret ritual of the Wulverghem family. Aunt Rosine, *la patronne*, noted every surreptitious look of admiration which was aimed at her niece with an outburst of her highly explosive temper. This girl who had been taken in as a refugee, to tolerate whom was in itself a mark of generosity, had only to behave herself and not be noticed.

But when the commandant of the place brought Angela a silk blouse back from a trip to Brussels, in the hope of outbidding the chocolate offerings of his subordinates, and when the aunt caught her own particular pet Sergeant-Major Roebig helping Angela to turn the mangle until he was red in the face, then her anger changed into hatred. She did not spare her niece any remarks which she felt the situation called for, and from then on she allowed her to work only behind locked doors and under the supervision of Crooked Leopold. During all this time Angela did not have a single person who was close to her or in whom she could place any trust. So no one knew what she really thought, what she felt, what her sufferings were or her hopes. The world in which she had lived was gone, swallowed up in blood. The one in which she actually was living seemed unreal and clouded, like the shadowy portals of hell—and like that place it was filled with grotesque faces, gargoyles.

Perhaps she no longer even remembered a little incident



which occurred in the early part of the war, during the first months of her stay at the Wulverghems'.

It was a warm, sunny autumn day. The sky was clear, but a cloud of dust hung over the roads, stirred up by the boots, hoofs, wheels of mass movements of troops, streaming westward in an unbroken line. They sang hoarsely, roughly, with parched throats. From the direction of Langemarck, where the battle was raging, you could hear the growl of the cannon.

It was the eve of the famous attack when they threw in the 'young regiments,' the 221st, 222nd, 223rd, for the first time. These consisted almost entirely of volunteers who, in a state of ecstasy, rushed singing straight into the deadly fire.

Towards evening one of these regiments was passing through Lindeken and stopped for a short rest under the shady trees.

A group of young soldiers had halted in front of Aunt Wulverghem's tavern, and they were well-nigh exhausted from the march and from thirst. Exactly as they had been marching and standing they threw themselves on the ground, they tore open their sweat-soaked uniforms and shoved their knapsacks under their heads. Most of them fell asleep instantly, snoring with wide-open mouths, and some took off their boots and groaningly bound up their blistered, bleeding feet. A non-commissioned officer had knocked at the door and asked for water for his men. But Rosine and her daughters were not inclined to touch any such unprofitable business, and at such times Crooked Leopold remembered his patriotism and pretended to be entirely crippled. So only Angela was left to go to the spring under the supervision of a corporal and to carry the heavy, brimming wooden pails back to the suffering men. While the other soldiers were greedily gulping down the water or cooling their heads and hands with it she saw a very young man lying on the ground



by the doorstep who appeared to be so exhausted that he was incapable of even holding the cup a comrade handed to him. It fell from his trembling hand; the water ran in the dust; the youth's head, with its pale, sweat-covered forehead, fell forward as though he were losing consciousness.

Whereupon Angela, in a burst of sympathy, ran quickly to the cellar and brought back a glass of strong, invigorating home-made cider. Without a word she knelt down beside the young man, whose helmet had fallen from his narrow, ash-blond head, and held the drink to his lips. But in the instant when he was raising himself slightly on his elbow and was about to taste the first sip another man, who was sitting beside him, pulled him roughly back by the shoulder. "Don't take it," he muttered, with a hostile and suspicious look at Angela. "Perhaps it's poisoned."

In that early, overwrought period of the war there was a widespread fear of snipers and malicious acts on the part of the native population, and all sorts of rumours were rife which led to over-hasty suspicion and corresponding treatment.

Angela, who had learned German from her mother, understood what he said. She slowly took the glass away from the half-opened lips of the young man, and her eyes were clouded by an expression of embarrassment and sorrow. Then suddenly the young man opened his own eyes wide and gazed into her face. He had the look of a dreamer or of a person just awakened, who is not quite sure where he is, and in that brief second while he looked at her the colour of life flowed back into his cheeks.

A slight smile, which Angela involuntarily returned, passed over his features, and as he straightened himself up with an effort she heard him say in a parched voice, "You leave off. She is——"

But that was all he was able to say.



And at the same time he took the glass from Angela's hand and drained it before his comrade could again stop him.

Then he set it down and whispered a soft "*Merci*," still looking in her face; then suddenly his head fell forward, like a fruit from a tree, and dropped into her lap as she kneeled there before him. His eyes were closed again, he breathed like a convalescent child, and over his face there still hovered that smiling, almost dreamlike expression of gratitude, trust, and security.

Angela sat motionless and did not heed her aunt's shrill voice ordering her to come indoors.

With an almost imperceptible touch, she stroked the young man's hair and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

In a few minutes the bugles blew, drums began to roll, and orders were being barked.

The soldiers staggered laboriously to their feet, grabbed their stacked rifles, and set their helmets straight.

Before he lifted his head from her lap his lips framed some words, but she could not understand them.

But when he stood up in front of her he repeated it more distinctly,

"What is your name?"

"Angela," was her reply. It did not occur to her to mention her whole name.

"Angela," he repeated with almost incredulous and smiling surprise, and that expression was still in his eyes when another command tore him away into the hastily forward-marching columns.

This young man was one of the sixteen boys in my class at school. And he was one of the four to survive. We were not in the same unit in the Army, and I heard his story only later on when we met again. But first I heard about it from



Angela, when I came to know her by chance in Brussels. That was three years afterwards.

The young soldier who had fallen asleep in her lap was called Alexander von Hohtopp. He was the son of a high Prussian officer, and because his Northern German manner of speech seemed affected and silly to our ears he had to stand a great deal of ridicule from his schoolmates. He was a delicate boy, somewhat subject to physical disabilities, and had a great talent for music. He was probably spoiled by his beautiful and elegant mother, but we shuddered to hear that his father beat him with a riding-whip for even a slight misdemeanour, to keep him from being a weakling, and that he locked him up in a dark room when he said that he wanted to be a musician and not an Army officer.

But now, of course, he had been carried along by the wave of patriotic enthusiasm, and he was one of the first to go to the front.

The day after the halt at Lindeken he was slightly wounded near Langemarck, was sent home, and after his convalescence was sent to the Russian front. It was three years later, in the summer of 1917, that he—now a lieutenant and head of a company—was transferred with his regiment to Flanders.

### § 3

Alexander had not forgotten that fleeting encounter on the eve of his first battle. And when, after terrible and bloody weeks in concrete pillboxes and shell-holes on the battlefield of Flanders, he was given two weeks' leave he looked up the tiny village of Lindeken on the map—he remembered the name—and arranged for the car which was taking him to the station to stop there.

He found the road lined with the linden-trees, the spring,



the luxuriant vegetable garden, the old tavern. It was like finding a landscape he believed to have seen once in a dream. He went into the tavern, almost without any hope of finding the girl of whom after three years, like the landscape, he had kept a strangely luminous, dreamlike memory. As he sat at the corner of a table and was served cider by a fat, over-friendly woman the whole enterprise seemed childish and silly; he laughed at his foolish sentimentality, ordered some apple brandy, and was about to leave without having made up his mind to inquire about the girl. Then the mechanical musical box began to tinkle, and two rustic graces, coarse and plump, swung into the room; the one had an oily hair arrangement and the other had artificial curls. Old Rosine knew what their duty was towards a handsome young officer on leave, so she ordered her two daughters, the Sardine and the Cantine, out on reconnaissance duty. The girls sat down at his table and began to grin at him in expectation of the usual preliminaries. But Alexander was little edified by these material and dubious apparitions on the site of his dreams and called for his bill. At that instant a soldier from the base appeared at the door and, after clanking his heels to the officer, asked if his laundry was ready. One of the girls stood up and yelled through the back door in a piercing, grating voice:

“Angela!”

Then she gave some instructions about the washing.

Alexander remained sitting, although he had paid his bill, and his eyes were glued to the door.

In another moment he saw Angela come in, her arms full of freshly ironed shirts, in a ragged smock, her face slightly red from the steam in the laundry, her heavy blonde braids pinned close to her head.

She delivered the washing and accepted the payment without exchanging any further remarks with the soldier, who gave



her a tip. Before she left the room she may have glanced at the young officer who was sitting on a bench never taking his eyes off her, but she did not recognize him and apparently took no notice of him.

Alexander stood up, then sat down again and ordered more brandy, all of which encouraged the girls to increase their grinning and Mamma to redouble her amiability. They thought that they had to deal with a shy gentleman; they played record after record in the musical box, to give him courage and put him in the right mood. But he only sat there, waiting and dreaming to himself, although his chauffeur had warned him several times that he would lose his leave train from Roselaere.

Towards evening, instead of being driven to the railway station, Alexander, who had waited in vain for Angela's reappearance, went to the local commandant and asked for a billet in the village. He said he did not feel well enough to travel, that he would like to get some sleep and a little rest there. As they were accustomed to all sorts of nervous whims and follies on the part of men coming back from the battle-fields, the lieutenant acceded to his wish, not without making a sly remark about the special qualities of the *estaminet* of the Plump Raisins in case his fellow-officer was in search of amusement.

That evening he did not even catch a glimpse of Angela. He sat in the bar and drank until his eyes, as on that earlier occasion, closed with fatigue. Then he went off to bed—an unsolved riddle for Rosine and her daughters, who had continued their efforts, otherwise so uniformly successful, to the point of exhaustion. Something which lay deeper than discretion or shyness had kept him from asking the women about her or even mentioning her name to them.

The next day in the light of early morning he saw her from



his window as she went out into the fields. It was summer, and she wore only a thin smock and had on neither shoes nor stockings. Crooked Leopold, as guard, hobbled after her.

He quickly followed them, watched from a short distance as she began to dig up early potatoes in a field, and then, when Crooked Leopold had stretched himself out for a nap in the shade of a bush, he spoke to her.

"You are Angela," he said, without a trace of shyness or uncertainty.

She nodded, surprised, and got up from her work.

"I recognized you at once," he went on, "when you came into the tavern yesterday. But I did not want to speak to you before the others. That is why I stayed here overnight."

"Are we acquainted?" she asked, with cool wonder.

"You don't know me"—he laughed—"but I know you! Once I went to sleep in your lap," he added, amused by her forbidding look. "To be sure, it was probably only a matter of minutes. But it seemed like an eternity to me. That was nearly three years ago."

"My God!" she exclaimed suddenly. "Was that you? Yes, I remember! You looked so miserable then and so pale——"

"And you gave me a glass of hard cider. A comrade warned me——"

She nodded.

"Now I remember it all," she said, and looked at him.

He stretched out his hand, and she wiped hers on her apron before giving it to him.

"I could not help thinking about it," he said softly.

She hung her head.

Then they were silent for a while, and he held her hand.

"Where have you come from now?" she asked at last, and slowly drew her hand from his.

"I have leave from that," he said, nodding towards the



horizon in the west, from which there came a barely perceptible humming, almost like a continuous vibration shaking the air, "for two weeks. I was supposed to go home yesterday."

"Then you have lost a whole day," she said.

"Not lost it," he exclaimed. "I wanted to see you."

"Then you are leaving to-day?" she asked.

"I don't know," he replied. "I am not in any hurry. I'd like to stay—and talk with you for a while."

"That is impossible here," she said, and looked anxiously round. "I must work."

"Must you work all day?"

She nodded.

"And in the evening?"

"You must go home," she said. "Aren't they expecting you?"

He shook his head.

"No one knows that I am on leave. It came unexpectedly. I can just as well get back a day later."

She hesitated briefly.

"If you want to talk to me again," she finally said, "come this evening to the spring, where there is a bench. But you need not stay on here—for my sake."

"But I want to, Angela," he said, smiling, "for your sake."

#### § 4

He stayed for the two weeks.

They met every evening at the bench behind the spring which was nearly hidden by a thick privet hedge.

He had no desire to go home. He had been there for a few days before his unit was transferred to Flanders, and he had never in all his life felt so forlorn and like a stranger. His



father had been made governor of some provincial city; he stalked round on his stiff, gouty legs, rattled his sabre, clanked his spurs, and still spouted the same patriotic sentiments which three years earlier had sounded so fiery and fresh. Now that the younger man had learned what the reality of war was they sounded unspeakably shallow, empty, and embarrassing. In the evenings he had sat with older officers at a club table, drunk to the Kaiser, to the coming victory, and heard the same dirty stories that he was already more than fed up with in the officers' mess. His mother had grown grey and silent, and her lovely face, which used to be so filled with tender radiance, was set in an unchanging expression of resignation. She went out every morning to supervise a Red Cross kitchen and every afternoon to her group of ladies who knitted socks for the soldiers and conducted monotonous conversations. He was tormented by the memory of her having forcibly restrained her tears when they parted. And the girls he had met all seemed to him so silly, stupid, insipid. He had nothing to talk about with them. He knew that if he said a single word to any of these people about what he really thought and felt, they would freeze in their tracks out of sheer helplessness and lack of comprehension. They would think him ill or crazy. What was there for him to do in a place like that?

Yet he was neither over-reflective nor capricious. Like every young person, he naturally hungered for gaiety, the company of others, the fun of a life shared together—but more than all that he had a craving he could not still for the nearness, the warmth, the deeper harmony between one human being and another, which can spring only from the magnetic core of the opposite sex. He found nothing of this in the dance halls and cafés of the cities behind the front or any other place where fleeting adventures were to be bought. In these years of pre-



mature development amid exclusively male society his physical yearning had come to equal the need of his soul, and the one could not be fulfilled without the other.

The thing that he craved existed between him and Angela, without any need of words or explanation. She was as young, as mature and lonely, as he was. Her mother, who was of German origin, had been killed by a German bullet. Her father and her former *fiancé*—she could no longer even recall his face—were fighting on the other front, the side of her people. Or perhaps they had already been killed.

This young man at her side might conceivably have fought against them, shot at them. He belonged to those whom they called the “enemies.” But in three long years he had not forgotten that she was once kind to him, and yet she had done nothing special that could have any claim to value in her own memory. Now he had come to her, as though some foreordination had decreed that they were to be joined together, and they felt this bond to be something quite natural, quite clear, yet infinitely mysterious, so that they must not even speak of it, nor did they feel the need of putting it into words. Perhaps it was that secret thing for which human beings search so desperately and which no power of intellect or force of arms can produce.

A shaft of light now revealed it to these two young people. They not only felt, they also knew something in common; it was a fresh, yet-unborn meaning to their lives. In the evenings they sat on the bench together; they were often silent, yet they sensed that they were thinking the same thing, and often they talked freely and softly about everything that came into their minds. They barely touched each other, yet the current which flowed between them was stronger and more real than anything actual, and it brought them that best of all things—the consciousness, the complete reality of happiness.



Like all lovers, in their hours together they thought they were alone in the world, and they forgot that there are eyes, ears, and mouths which never rest and which respect no limits. Like all lovers, they were convinced that no one knew their secret and that no one paid any attention to where the strange young lieutenant went for his evening walks. It was not the concern of anyone else—so they thought.

But Rosine and her daughters thought otherwise.

They had solved the puzzle of the officer who, in spite of apple brandy, mechanical music, and gentle nudgings of the hip, could not be excited. And Angela's case was as clear as day to them; she was a perfidious, wily, dissembling creature who was not satisfied with ordinary war bread, but who was on the lookout for finer fare. Of course, she must have met the gentleman somewhere earlier and got her claws into him, for it was obvious that he had come there on her account. Rosine boiled with anger, but she did not dare to make trouble so long as the officer was about; she gathered from the respectful attitude towards him of the other military men—which was really on account of his father's name and rank rather than because of the young man himself—that he was a highly placed, perhaps influential person whom it was wisest not to annoy. So she saved up the satisfaction of her urge for vengeance until later on.

But she was watchful to see that the barn-door, inside which Angela slept, was tightly locked when she went to bed at ten o'clock. She took the only key to it out of the lock herself and kept it under her pillow. She wanted at least to diminish their pleasure as much as she could. Even Roebig, the sergeant-major from the base, the local commandant, and the other beaux about the place knew what was going on and kicked each other under the table when Alexander would excuse himself after an early supper to go out for a breath of fresh air.



Sergeant-Major Roebig had even sneaked down to the spring and hidden himself in the bushes, but the hedge, with its thick leaves, proved a loyal protector to the lovers; the evening breeze outweighed the gentle tones of their talk, and the darkness threw a veil over them. The eavesdropper could not understand anything, and he could only see them vaguely. But his imagination on that account worked all the more clearly and freely, because he must take back something to offer to the gentlemen at the round table in the tavern. This he did with so much success that he roused in them a certain respect—nay, even admiration mixed with jealousy—for Alexander and his Don Juan qualities. At the same time they itched with resentment and disillusion over Angela, whom they had considered impregnable and who, as they now discovered, was that only to them, but not so at all to this other man. Nothing makes men so angry, so mean, or so vicious as hurt vanity. So it came about that they treated Alexander, in spite of his aloofness, with a deferential, benevolent *camaraderie*, whereas they persecuted Angela with their secret hatred and vindictive plans, of which she was probably less and less aware the deeper she sank in the tide of her unhopedor happiness.

On the last day of his leave hell broke loose up at the front. The second great offensive of the Allies was launched. The rumble of the distant gun-fire made the window-panes rattle, and it seemed to be coming nearer all the time. Near Wyt-schaete, by Dixmude, in the Houthoulster Forest, everywhere the attackers pushed forward. Troops dashed by in frantic forced marches, and from the morose looks on the men's faces you could tell what was in store for them. An unending line of ambulances streamed back from the front with their pitiful loads. Dust-covered orderlies clattered through the villages. Heaven and earth boomed with the roar of motors and anti-



aircraft guns. A state of supreme emergency was declared, all leave was cancelled. Alexander discovered from the staff telephone that his regiment, which he must rejoin the next day, was in one of the worst breaks in the line. The people at the base, and civilians too, listened with agitation to the sounds of the oncoming battle. Many of the natives had a satisfied or hopeful look in their eyes, coupled with a dangerously menacing expression. As night fell the noise ceased abruptly, only to start up again with a roar along the flaming red horizon. In the middle of the night there was an air-raid alarm in Lindeken, and immediately afterward the village heard for the first time the whizzing whirr and deafening crash of a falling bomb. According to instructions and impelled by fear, every one rushed to prepared cellars and shelters. In no time at all every bed and every house was empty and all the inhabitants, whether friend or foe, were crowded into cellars and vaults for the rest of the night.

The Wulverghem family had taken refuge in their sandbag-protected potato cellar amid a flood of wails, curses, and uncontrolled screaming. In her terror fat Rosine had fallen down the steep stairs, and down on top of her catapulted at the same time both the Sergeant-Major Roebig and Crooked Leopold, who in that moment of peril were not inclined to dispute their respective claims to that place. The ladies spread potato bags over their somewhat revealing nightgowns, a bottle of brandy was discovered, and after the first sensation of alarm had passed they made themselves quite cosy down there. They had forgotten Angela. The key to the unprotected barn where she slept was under the pillow on Rosine's bed. Alexander shook the door in vain, for neither he nor Angela knew the hiding-place for the key. He heard her voice inside calling to him to go to a place of safety himself, that she was not afraid. Then he picked up a carriage-pole which



was standing against the wall and broke down the door. There they stood opposite each other, the radiance from the moon falling across their faces. They no longer thought of war, flight, or danger. Now they really were alone in all the world. For the first time they clasped each other, and there was no end to their embrace. Their hearts throbbed without fear; they were oblivious to the crashing and shattering all round them. The village was in smoking ruins, men were hurrying along with stretchers, the anti-aircraft guns were barking. But they were unaware of this. They were so happy that in that hour they may have longed for death as the supreme consummation of their desires. But death passed by, and the flood tide of life swept over them.

## § 5

My battery, already described as the Corpse Circus, was also in Flanders at that time and was putting on what you might call a series of gala performances; but after many weeks, during which we had almost forgotten that anyone in the world takes off his boots to sleep, I suddenly found myself bathed, shaved, my hair cut, dressed in a new silk shirt under my tunic, and on three days' leave in Brussels. I was living in a hotel for officers near the railway-station, and when I moved in I had discovered a slip of paper in the drawer of my night-table with the following affable advice written on it in German:

FOR MY SUCCESSOR:

No need to look far afield.

The chambermaid on the second floor is most highly recommended and costs only ten francs.

A bargain!

(Signed) SCHMITT

*Lieutenant in the Reserve Corps*

In spite of all my appreciation for this comradely gesture, a gesture which epitomized in pithy form the general purpose



of a 'rest leave' and the average standard of our inner lives, I preferred to wander round in the city, to see people and seek out my own adventures. After a day passed mostly on the Mont des Arts, in the twilight of Gothic churches, along the stands of art and book stores and in the Old Museum, among the Madonnas and demons of the primitives, in front of statues by Rodin; after an evening spent in the Café Hulstkamp, dreamily sipping *apéritifs* and listening to the atonic cadence of the chorus of human voices along the boulevards, and after a monumental meal in the Épaule de Mouton, where all sorts of delicacies were still to be had, I started off in a mood mixed with youthful boredom and mature curiosity along the way of all flesh, which thoughtlessly led me to the doors of the Gaîté.

One night in the Gaîté in Brussels was the dream of the whole Army—that is to say, of its privileged part who wore sword knots. The rest of them, the great majority, could not even dream of this Paradise, because at the entrance these words were blazoned on a huge plate: ADMISSION TO OFFICERS ONLY.

For the rank and file they supplied more primitive facilities at the base headquarters behind the lines. They were distinguished by their complete lack of illusion, and matters were regulated purely from the sanitary point of view. They were more or less on a par as to comfort and style with a delousing institution, and were usually to be found in the vicinity of this latter. It is not surprising that the cracking chasm between the castes, the contrasts which were only temporarily ignored and forgotten in the zones of greatest danger, were accentuated and deepened by leaves and visits home.

The Gaîté was the largest Brussels night club, an extension to the pretty little Vaudeville Theatre, where in the evening 'revues,' in proper costumes and personally censored by the



governor-general, were produced, but where after midnight closed performances were given which did not cost the producers anything worth mentioning as to the costumes, for most of the ladies appeared in their own hair. In these theatre annexes, in the dance, club, and grill rooms, life went on at a fast pace all night long. In addition to the regular entertainers there was a mass round-up of professional women and girls to attend to the amusement of the pleasure-starved guests, most of whom would be leaving the next day to go out to meet an uncertain, or fairly certain, fate. Therefore they had nothing to save, and they acted as though in these few night hours they could buy up the sum of all the joys they had missed in life and cram it into themselves.

In connexion with this affable establishment there was an expensive but strictly disreputable hotel where they required neither luggage nor marriage certificates, so that actually everything was arranged for. The prices were fixed accordingly. The bottle or two of champagne necessary to create the right mood and to impress the hotel staff swallowed up the entire liquid assets of a lieutenant's monthly pay. But in the trenches you couldn't get rid of the cash, and you knew that not just any woman could get into the *Gaîté*, that they had to have certain qualifications or references, so that you were under the illusion of having to do with better-class ladies. My God, I have never seen a sadder, more pitiful, more desperate place than these rooms, ornately filled with plush furniture, mirrors, tawdry gilt decorations, with their motto implying gaiety, noisy from night till early morning with the sound of music, popping corks, laughter, and shrieks.

Yet all this was not lacking in comedy; there was the behaviour of the clientele, a weird mixture of routine and shyness, of connoisseurship and naïveté, coarse manners and well-bred demeanour; there was the gibberish of the two



languages, the commercial competition and effort of the girls in the floor show and all the stages of male and female drunkenness, from babbling talkativeness to howling melancholy. You sat trying to drink your depressed thoughts out of your mind; you approved or criticized each other's choice of girl and talked about little discreet subjects, with a mixture of cynicism and nonchalance which was considered quite elegant. . . .

Over there sat the colonel, who was so feared by his men because of his severity and let himself be spanked with a riding-whip by the ladies. . . . Across the way was a young lieutenant wearing the *Pour le Mérite*, the highest military decoration, and he had just returned from his third visit to the Castle of the Knights (the little nickname for the special clinic in which so many leaves ended). Conversation and jokes centred on themes like that, and the younger you were the more ambitious you were to appear to be as well versed and experienced as possible. Many a man knew a girl at home whom he idealized in his dreams—nearly every one felt that way about his mother. . . . But here they did like the rest, they snatched at any shred of life they could lay their hands on. . . . What difference did it make? . . .

Such were we, the young heroes of those days. That was the freedom we had proclaimed, the high adventure into which we had hurled ourselves with such embattled fury. Six months in a bloody hell, and one night in the Gaîté.

I had an appointment there with a gentleman whom I had met under rather remarkable circumstances on an earlier trip to Brussels. In the train I was reading a volume of Baudelaire, and suddenly the man sitting opposite to me, with his eyes shut tight behind the strong lenses of his glasses, began to recite the loveliest verses from *Fleurs du Mal* in a melodious, lilting French. He wore no uniform. He was an agent of



the German police squad which was in charge of prostitution in Brussels, and he had to do with the supervision and regulation of night life, and undoubtedly he also was connected with the Secret Service, presumably of both sides. He was short, middle-aged, insignificant-looking. The girls in the Gaîté, among whom he was fabulously popular, nicknamed him Monsieur le Curé because he made them think of the kindly father-confessors at home in their villages. He was present in the establishment every night and settled all difficulties, large or small, in a quiet, humorous way which concealed an abundance of power and wisdom. He was a completely ambiguous, gifted, unscrupulous character.

At our table sat Naughty Lysette, a celebrated figure in the cafés and dance halls of Brussels. They called her La Reine de la Gaîté, and she was without doubt by far the most alluring and wilful little phenomenon in the place. It was said that she gave her favours according to her own likes and not on a purely business basis. She did not need to do that. The Curé told me that she was a commercial genius in all branches of smuggling and juggling of foreign exchange. (I am convinced he had a partnership in her enterprises.) She had a bewitching figure and a face full of bold, rather wild beauty, such as you find among Scottish or Northern women. She was witty, outrageous, incalculable; she could drive you crazy with her hysteria, especially when she had been drinking.

On this particular evening my attention was attracted to a young girl who went through the rooms with a trayful of cigarettes hung round her neck. She wore a simple black silk dress with a white lace apron, which set off to advantage her fair complexion and soft blonde hair, and amid the prevalent undress costumes of the other women her modest and fully clothed appearance had a sensational effect. I watched her when she was called at the various private booths, where the



people were sometimes carrying on in the wildest fashion, and saw her attend to her job with steady, cool amiability. From her walk, her face, the movements of her hands, there seemed to emanate a kind of harmony, of inner compactness, as though the core of her being was not here at all, but somewhere else and untouched by everything that was going on around her.

Naughty Lysette caught my look as it followed the girl, and she rapped my knuckles lightly with her black ostrich-feather fan. "Hands off," she said. "She's not for the likes of you!"

"Who is the girl?" I asked softly.

Instead of an answer she opened her almost empty cigarette-case, beckoned to the girl, and called:

"Angela! Come here!"

While she was picking out her cigarettes she introduced me to the girl. "He is called Carl," she said, "and he is not exactly disagreeable, but unfortunately he is much too young. If he grows older he may become a very nice person."

"Let us hope," I said in French.

The girl looked at me for an instant, and it seemed to me that she had taken the remark in the right sense.

"Let us hope," she repeated in German, and nodded to me in a friendly way.

Later on in the night, just when I was dancing with Lysette, who was already quite tipsy, a terrific row suddenly broke out in the next room; a drunken cavalry captain had tried to force an embrace on the cigarette girl, and in the course of his action had upset the whole contents of her tray. All the women had rushed forward to her rescue and were gesticulating as though some one were trying to murder their only child. The cigarettes were all over the floor, the women were screaming, the cavalry captain was snorting with rage and scolding the



girl, the victim of his assault, in the coarsest language, saying she was to blame for everything and demanding that she should be discharged by the dismayed management.

Lysette had been listening; then she suddenly broke away from me and dashed like a soldier going over the top into the next room. Undeterred by any explanations, she fought her way through to the raging cavalry captain and then smacked him on either ear.

What ensued cannot be related in any orderly fashion.

The cavalry captain went off into a convulsion of nervous laughter; they called for a doctor, for the police, for brandy, for sabres and pistols; and by then two more gentlemen, who had nothing to do with the matter except that they had stepped on each other's toes, were boxing each other's ears. Every possible kind of private quarrel burst out like old wounds. Women tore one another's hair. One dark little Walloon, who bore the nickname of La Mitrailleuse, began to throw glasses. Lysette meanwhile had promptly gone over to the cavalry captain felled by her blows, who lay in a chair and was still laughing like a parrot; she took out his wallet and paid the management for the loss incurred in cigarettes and glasses. In the general uproar the Curé, grey, bespectacled, insignificant figure, suddenly climbed on to a table, made a sign to the orchestra and began to sing in a weak, hoarse voice:

This is life, this is the life,  
Of girls in a *café chantant*.  
Love to them is no tra-gedy . . .

This had the effect of a release; every one joined in, and little by little the storm abated. In the midst of the uproar I had looked round for the cigarette girl. She was leaning against the wall in a corner, deathly pale, and with fixed, dry eyes.

"Don't take it too hard," I said to her, and tried to gather



up the packets of cigarettes scattered round under people's feet.

"Now I shall lose my place," she whispered.

"Perhaps you will find something better," I said. "This is no place for you."

"It is the only place where they would take me in," she said softly, with a look of fear and despair in her eyes.

Then Lysette appeared. She had emerged as the uncontested victor in the battle, and she brought with her the cowed head of the establishment. "Everything is arranged," she said. "The girl is not to blame." Then with a motherly gesture she smoothed Angela's hair. "Go home, Angela," she said, "for to-night I'll take your place!"

With that she hung the tray over her *décolleté* shoulders and went off crying her wares in a penetrating voice, to the laughter and applause of the crowd: "Cigars! Cigarettes!"

The next day when I was breakfasting with Naughty Lysette, who had a furnished apartment in the vicinity of the Gaîté, Angela appeared to thank her. And I then discovered how she came to be there.

## § 6

The day after the nocturnal air raid Alexander had been obliged to go back to the front, where his regiment was engaged for weeks in the battles which followed and which brought the offensive to a standstill. She had heard nothing from him, for there was no postal communication between the troops in action and the civilians in the rear.

In Lindeken life was normal once more, and Angela was now fully exposed to the hatred and malice of her surroundings. One can easily imagine the various phases of scorn, slander, and trickery which she had to bear.



The door to her room in the barn, where she slept, was fastened as usual, but one night she heard the rusty lock squeak and in came the local commandant who had wheedled the key from Madame Rosine through the sergeant-major.

He sat down on her bed, he reeked with brandy, and he attempted to be tender with her. When she pushed him away he abused her. He said that she had no call to play the injured innocent since he had it in his power to have her sent away on the grounds of immorality if she did not listen to reason. What was sauce to the lieutenant was certainly so to his superior officer.

Then he went into action.

And Angela, who saw no other weapon of defence, suddenly picked up the kerosene lamp which stood by her bed and which he had lighted, and hurled it through the open door into a stack of dry hay and straw. The flames spread instantly, and the whole barn was on fire in no time. The sparks flew to the thatched roof of the *estaminet*, and the entire garrison had to turn out in order to prevent the spreading of the fire and to protect the Wulverghems' house from burning to the ground.

The next day she was taken away by two military *gendarmes*, and after a short stay in the Ghent police prison she was sent to a camp for forced labour for women. She slept in a barracks with thieves and vagrants, and in the morning she was mustered into a *bataillon* of women who were sent out with spades and pitchforks over their shoulders to work in the fields.

When, some weeks later, she found that there was no doubt but that she was going to have a baby she fled by night from the camp. She crept through the encircling barbed wire and ran blindly away. She did not even know herself where she was going. She did it all in a state of complete bewilderment and



mental haze; she was almost out of her mind. She felt that she had to drag or carry something away, to hide something which might be taken away or destroyed in those surroundings. She wandered by night, without food, in her sackcloth convict's garb, and by day she hid herself in deserted potato-bins or field hay-sheds, and now and then she found some raw turnips to eat. In one such barn she had a hæmorrhage and lost the baby. Some farmers found her lying there in a delirium of fever, and since they did not know her or anything about her they turned her over to an ambulance corps, who took her to a hospital for vagrant women in Brussels.

It was there that she finally recovered consciousness. She realized what had happened, and her only wish in the world was to die. At the same time she was terrified by the idea that she might be sent back, for the unpredictable duration of the war, to the desperate inferno of that labour camp. She had no possibility of getting into contact with Alexander. She did not even know that he was alive.

Then, however, in this hospital for fallen women, an un-hoped-for miracle was to happen to her. Her room-mates, who were all street women and who were there for the most part because of abortion or infection, began to mother and take care of her in the most unselfish way. With the sure sense derived from their experience they knew that Angela was different from them. Her story, which they coaxed out of her bit by bit, moved them to tears. It is an old maxim that if you can bring tears to the eyes of a wanton you can get anything you want from her. And there is nothing for which she weeps so easily, so abundantly, and so ardently as the thing she herself has lost for ever—true love.

So Angela, "the little angel of Louvain," became the *protégée*, a mascot, of the prostitutes of Brussels; they wept



over her here in the hospital and later in the Gaîté, and wanted her to remain unchanged and untouched like a beautiful and moving image framed behind glass.

One of the girls in her ward knew Naughty Lysette and told her the story; it was through her that Angela obtained a letter to the Curé, who, as head of the Vice Squad, could bring influence to bear on her further destiny. He used it to protect her from being deported again to the labour camp, to destroy in secret her criminal record, and to have her registered with the girls who came under his supervision. That was the only possible way for her to remain in Brussels, and that was why it would have been so hard for her to find any job other than this one in the Gaîté which Naughty Lysette had got for her. That was also why the incident of the previous night had so frightened and upset her.

And now again the event was to turn into another little miracle for her, for when Lysette, in connexion with Angela's visit, was telling me her story on that morning she happened by chance to mention Alexander's name—and of all the many thousands of unknown officers at the front who might have been sitting there in my place, to think that I was his school-mate and even his friend!

I naturally offered my services immediately to try to bring them into touch with each other, which was something Angela could not even attempt to do as she was, in a way, living in Brussels illegally and secretly and did not know of anyone who could well act for her. Still in Lysette's room, I sat down at her little desk all littered with papers full of figures, having to do with her many secret affairs, and strewn with cigarette stubs, and wrote him a long letter in which I also described how Angela was spending her free hours during the daytime; she was learning to play the piano because he had told her about his passion for music. And when I left the only fare-



well present with which I could give her any real pleasure was a pile of music.

## § 7

A year later the war was over. The German Army collapsed, and while the troops at the front were retreating in reasonable order, the bases went to pieces amid the wildest riots. In Belgium it was worst of all. That was where the occupation administration, believing that they were there as a permanency, had governed with the most thoroughgoing harshness, and now all the accumulation of suppressed hatred and hidden passions rose against them. The last German units had practically to flee in danger of their lives from the cities where now the most violent revulsion found expression. A wave of frenzied nationalism raged high; the uproar of new-found freedom and the intoxication of victory was blended with the blind fury of revenge and retaliation, and since they could no longer wreak it on their real enemies they directed it against all those who apparently had had dealings with them, especially, of course, on the women and girls who apparently or actually, of their own free will or of necessity, had been unable to withstand the oppressors. The first and most accessible victims were the public women, whereas private persons like Rosine Wulverghem and her daughters, who had observed appearances, could more easily talk themselves out of the situation. But wherever a woman was found who of her own volition and out of real love had bound herself to any 'enemy,' cruelty and appetite for revenge knew no limits.

Alexander did not receive that letter of mine, for at the time when I wrote he was no longer with his regiment in Flanders, but was lying in a hospital in Germany with one lung shot through. After that he was sent to a sanatorium in



Switzerland to convalesce and recover, and I, who was still at the front, was unable to reach him. It was only on the eve of the end of the war that I could get a message to him. Angela, while all this was happening, was still employed at the Gaîté, which for her had proved a convent-like refuge.

When the Germans withdrew the Gaîté was immediately closed and the girls, or as many as could be found, were rounded up. They were returned "for punishment" to their home communities, and so Angela, who no longer had any home, was taken back to the last place where she was registered with the police—to Lindeken.

Rosine and her daughters could not do enough to heap accusations and insults on her, for it was a favourable opportunity to keep their own skirts clean and give proof of their attitude. For their part they told only how they had outwitted, cheated, plundered the Germans, led them by the nose, and they were believed because they really had stowed away substantial packets of German paper marks.

In Ghent the women who were proved to have had relations with the enemies were driven naked through the streets, and some of them, like the witches in the Middle Ages, were thrown off the bridges into the canals. A terrifying rabble ran wild through the land, to carry out similar sadistic punishments in smaller towns. In Lindeken, where Angela was locked up in her barn, which had been rebuilt after it was burned, you could hear the avengers come singing and howling down the road from Roselaere. At their head was a proletarian woman, who herself led a wild life and was even nicknamed by the Germans Madame Trictrac and who now hoped to rescue her own soul from the clutches of the devil by denouncing and savagely baiting others.

Meantime Alexander had received word from me and had hastened to Brussels, arriving there at the last moment just



before the Armistice was concluded and the frontiers were closed, to rescue Angela. She had already left, and as he had no clue by which to look for her he went—in civilian clothes, of course, and pretending to be Flemish—to Lindeken. He arrived at the very hour when they were dragging her to the market-place to unclothe her, to flog her, and make her run the gauntlet down an alley of disgrace. (All this happened, may I add, not in the Thirty Years' War, but in the first quarter of the twentieth century, in the second quarter of which we are now drawing the breath of life?)

Crooked Leopold was the first to recognize Alexander as he hurried along the village street to share her fate if he could not rescue her from it. Like a pack of hounds the mob fell on him, knocked him to the ground, and ran for a ladder and rope. About that same time a troop of Belgian soldiers from the front, with their steel-blue coats and tunics still encrusted with the mud of the trenches, was moving along the high-road towards Lindeken. They were youngsters and more mature men too, the survivors of the terrible years whose homes were here in the village or on the neighbouring farms. They were on leave or had been demobilized and now they were marching along—some singing, others looking straight ahead in silence—towards home.

These men, the enemies of yesterday, saved the lives of Alexander and Angela.

They had really been in the war, and they had not yet forgotten it. They knew its deadly import. They knew what it was. They had seen enough of blood, death, and suffering, and of the anguish of a hunted creature. With the butts of their rifles they dispersed the mob, whose hysterical rioting was so disgusting to them. They took Alexander in charge and treated him like a prisoner of war, like a comrade from the other side who had had bad luck. They had no desire to



avenge themselves on a girl who had found her destiny. They understood the truth and respected it. One of them took Angela to his house to stay until Alexander could be released to marry her.

I do not need to tell any more. For this story begins and ends where time plays no part. It could be laid in any war, in any century, in any age—whenever death is cheated of its prey and hell of its sorry triumph. That is why I have told it.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### *The Silver Ship*

THERE are days when you look forward to your morning post, no matter what it brings, as you might to the continuation of an exciting serial story. And there are other days when you would like to throw it all unopened into the fire—not just the bills, but the whole sluggish pace of life, the eternally unrelenting repetitiousness, the tedious round, the dull-witted movement of the minute hand, the “ticking away of the death watch in our breasts.” It is morning, as magnificent and menacing as God’s wrath, in the beginning of June 1940. The radio, in between advertising the best and cheapest cemetery and the best and cheapest beer, has let drop something puzzling about the state of the battle in France. Towards the end it was only loud and senseless, like so much quacking of ducks, and it was impossible to grasp anything. Is there an offensive on the Somme? Or not yet? Or is it already over? Or won’t there be any at all? What does it all mean, what are all these words the content of which we cannot relate to reality? You rush to the door of your apartment and throw it open as though some one were standing outside who could clarify it all, as though good news, salvation, had come up in the elevator. . . .

Outside you find the letters, the milk, and the New York *Times*. You gaze at the front page, you forget to put the milk into the icebox or to pour the boiling water on the coffee. You read dark, puzzling hieroglyphs. Headlines. *Communiqués*. Those from one side sharply contradict those from the other. You stare at the little map, and your finger traces



along terrifying lines, black and broad like mourning borders. That is 'the front.' (But what does it look like? How can you tell? Is it quiet? Is it thundering?) Here is Weygand, over there the English. . . . Actually there are only sixteen miles between them, a narrow passage, an alley, and through that fatal tube the German mechanized divisions are pumped, throbbing in unbroken and unceasing line towards the Channel. . . . Why the devil is it not smashed through? What is going on there, what is brewing, how are they fighting, living, dying there? And what will it look like to-morrow, or in three hours, in three days, in three weeks? By God, it would be better to be there, right in the midst of it! You would not know any more about it, but you would have something to do, and you would be too tired to think. Suddenly you catch yourself frantically wishing to jump over a block of time, which otherwise you cling to by all its coat-tails. You want to race ahead of it, to overtake it, even though it is the brief, the measured, the precious span of your own life. Fearsome combinations of words course through your brain—you say them without thought: lost time, wasted time, time out of mind. . . .

My eyes travel unseeingly over my stack of letters. On top there lies one addressed in an unfamiliar handwriting, undoubtedly from some German; it might have come from a child, but is more likely to have been sent by a full-fledged one. The postmark on the envelope is Chicago.

DEAR HERR ZUCKMAYER [is what I read] :

You will certainly be surprised that I should be writing to you. For you will probably not remember me at all. I am the former Sabine Worm from Heidelberg. But when you knew me better you sometimes called me Glow-worm. I am the girl you followed into a greengrocer's shop on the main street of Heidelberg in the summer of 1919. When you were asked what



you wanted you purchased a single lemon. For that was probably the cheapest thing you could buy. You then dropped it into my shopping bag, took off your hat and said, "I wonder what lemons are good for?" That is how we met. And what a wonderful time followed. In all my life I have never laughed as much again. I can still remember as though it were to-day all the things you rambled on about if the night was long. Once you said you were about to compose the history of mankind, from the cave-dwellers to the Soviets, in a cycle of thirteen and a half full-length plays. The public would have to go to the theatre for fourteen nights in succession, and on the fourteenth they themselves would act. That would be the drama of the future. And I believed it. I was only nineteen then. But enough of these treasured memories. Since then I have married and followed my husband, who was highly cultivated but Jewish, to Chicago, where two years ago he died of pneumonia. We had brought my mother with us, and you can well imagine that our present situation is not exactly rosy. Dear Herr Zuckmayer, we have always read everything that has appeared about you in the newspapers, seen your plays, and been proud of you. Now my husband left me a rather well-preserved piano. It came over from Germany with us, and since I have accidentally heard that you too have landed here in the United States it occurred to me that you might be in the fortunate position of acquiring the piano on the instalment plan. For I know how you always loved music. But if you can't do it, please don't be angry with me. I am working in a chemical plant, but am undaunted. Don't you ever come to Chicago? That would be so gratifying. With all good wishes, and in friendly memory of the past,

Yours,

SABINE WIEROSZOWSKY (*née* WORM)

Great heavens, yes; Sabine Worm, to be sure, I remember quite distinctly. What did she look like? Or am I mixing her up with some one else? No, of course not; it was the main street in Heidelberg (but I had forgotten the lemon stunt), summer of 1919. Swimming in the Neckar, the heat, the Mosquito Hole and the Blue Pike taverns, the cheap wine we drank (wasn't it called Schwarzer Herrgott, and it tasted like



Black Divinity, too!), friends, politics, flaming frenzy, art books, nocturnal discourses along the Philosophers' Lane, and love-making on park benches, scuffles with night watchmen, fist fights, the Revolutionary Students' Council, soup kitchens, empty pockets, great schemes, fantastic theatre, the plunge into Berlin, and all the undreamed-of, triumphant adventures, the post-War times. . . .

Sabine, your letter has blasted the numbing bonds of stagnant time, wrested me from its foul neap tide, and thrust me backward, forward, over all time. But that piano lies heavily on my stomach. I cannot buy it now. I have an aged dog, a guitar, two daughters, and a prehistoric typewriter; even that is a questionable amount of equipment for a light detachment marching under sealed orders. No, it is impossible for me to pay up on the piano. And in the days when we knew each other I could not have done it either. For we had no money then.

We none of us had any money. But that did not bother us. We had our lives. We had been saved. We had come home with all of our good bones intact, and that was worth more than all the millions of the inflation period. We woke up in the morning and laughed because to-day no one could shoot at us. We went to sleep happy because no alarm signal could yank us out of our feather beds. We were still there, and the whole topsy-turvy times belonged to us. We were full of appetite for life, imagination, defiance, boldness. We were bursting with ideas and hopes. The whole world, with all its possibilities, lay before us. That was all we had.

And to-day we are again in exactly the same position. Except that we are twenty years older. If you like, that may be a certain advantage. For those twenty years no one can take away from us.

They did not start off quite as cheerfully as one might have



wished. We looked rather like tatterdemalion sneak-thieves when we returned from the front. We were underfed, we had weird appetites—a chemical craving for sweets, for instance (and whenever we could ferret out any we crammed them into our mouths like gypsy children), and for alcohol. That is why we guzzled the first foreign condensed milk by the soup-spoonful, that thick, over-sweetened sticky stuff which we received in soldiers' parcels. And we swilled down the monopoly brandy, made out of potato peelings and sold wholesale by the State distilleries; it made our skulls fume like the Krupp blast furnaces before they shut down. That industry, incidentally, after having been diverted principally into the production of armaments and munitions, was now almost at a standstill; or else it became the plaything for the savage, speculating pirates like Stinnes looting a falling market. Jugglers of that sort made fortunes in those days, and the rest sank *en masse* into deep waters. Agriculture was impoverished and ruined. In the beautiful spick-and-span kitchens of our parents' homes substitute foods, without any nutritive value, were prepared. A factory like my father's, which had with great difficulty been converted to produce percussion fuses, now ate up its remaining capital in the reconversion to its original article of production, wine-bottle caps. The wine business, the gold-mine of our homeland, went to pieces.

We were reduced to poverty. As good patriots we had invested our private fortunes in War Loans. Now we could paper the walls with the certificates. My formerly wealthy grandfather had gone to his eternal rest pillowed on his shares of stock in the Berlin-to-Baghdad Railway. Life-insurance policies were paid out in paper marks and barely covered the cost of a funeral. In the canteens of the French Army of Occupation we could buy American corned beef. That was



the acme of culinary enjoyment and of qualified nutriment. At the railway-stations a roaring business was done in American cigarettes, which we greedily inhaled instead of our own straw cigarettes and oak-leaf cigars. To us that was the smell of the great world, from which we were cut off. Our first civilian suits were refashioned out of our last grey-green, streaked and faded uniforms. Our shoes were cobbled out of wooden pulp, substitute for leather. Our soap consisted of sand and rancid grease. That was what we looked like.

Travel by rail was a poor joke. After hours of delay a shabby train would pull in, jammed to the platforms with demobilized soldiers, the engine spewing out clouds of filthy black soot. Just after I was demobilized we finally got word of my elder brother, of whom we had lost track in the last weeks of the war. He was an infantry lieutenant, and during the retreat shortly before the Armistice he had been wounded somewhere between the French and German lines. A bullet had shattered his pelvis and torn part of his intestines away. They had hauled him back to some emergency shelter, where he lay with a high fever and without any proper bandaging or care. In all the pell-mell confusion of the breaking up of the front he was carried in open bullock carts, out of which they dumped the dead in piles along the way, and finally arrived—with those who chanced to survive, in a train which happened to come by—at Bremen, a city on the North Sea coast far away from our home town.

The most agonizing part of it was that this train, as it crept like a snail through western Germany, across the Rhine, passed through our native city of Mainz—yes, it even stayed there for a long time—and that my brother, in a raging fever, implored, beseeched, shrieked at, the railway staff to put him down and send him home or at least to get his parents to come to him, since they had no idea that he was there nor of his con-



dition. But nothing was done, or nothing could be done, because no one had any orders, because no one in authority was to be found, because no one was allowed to leave the station. The ghastly journey continued northward for endless, heedless miles. We heard from a lady in Bremen, a casual acquaintance, that he was lying near to death in a general hospital and calling for his mother.

My mother was ready at once to undertake the journey with me straight through the country racked with revolution and general disruption. This was a trip which in normal times would have taken twelve hours. Now it took us almost three days, and we were not at all sure of getting through. I had wangled a pass from the Red soldiers' council, allowing us to travel in military trains. In those weeks there was no other means of transport, nor was there any schedule, and the stations were desolate and unheated; in many of them all the panes of glass had been shattered by bullets during the revolutionary riots. Along the platforms some old Army field kitchens had been set up and were being run by nurses who had been released. They served some kind of hot, watery brew, either coffee or soup, whichever you chose to call it. They were constantly besieged by the shivering, hungry, elbowing and pushing masses of men returning home. And just as you had wrested a cupful of warming liquid some one would shout, "Here comes a train!" and you spilled the hot drink on your trousers as you all rushed in a panic, like a stampeding herd, to the cars round which a mortally dangerous and utterly ruthless hand-to-hand combat raged. Every one wanted to climb aboard, to get to the next place. Whatever it was.

My mother, who was tiny of stature and whom I often had to carry through the mob on my shoulders, was passed like a bundle through a broken window into the train toilet, where



she had a temporary place to sit except when some particularly unconstrained fellow-traveller required it. As for me, I hung for part of the journey on to a cluster of men on the platform of the tender. At night we worked our way into a compartment intended for eight people and now crammed with nearly thirty. We lifted my mother into the luggage rack, and there she slept amid knapsacks, steel helmets, gas-masks, and an odd assortment of old arms, covered over with sheets of the *Red Banner* and the *Forwards*. It was almost touching the way these boisterous bullies, these most hard-boiled and shameless ruffians, suddenly became tender and anxious to be helpful as soon as they grasped that here was a mother travelling to her gravely wounded son. But sometimes I had to bring that realization home to them by means of judiciously aimed punches on the jaw and kicks on the shins. I was fluent in the only language they understood. And in spite of the whole situation we both often had to laugh to see one of these brutalized cave bears, who had for the moment forgotten her presence, stop short in the midst of an unimaginably blasphemous trench oath or a joke of hair-raising frankness and clap his hand over his mouth with an embarrassed grin, shutting himself up as though he had been caught in the act.

We had broken axles, rail defects, lack of coal, floods, and hairbreadth escapes from collisions. Nevertheless we got there. It was an icy winter morning; there were strikes in progress in Bremen, everything was closed; the tram conductors were parading round the town with red banners and placards instead of driving their trams, and the police were spending their time trying to interrupt the game instead of showing strangers which way to go. So we had to overcome all kinds of hazards and wander with empty stomachs up and down and all around until we finally found the barren schoolhouse in a suburb where an emergency hospital had been installed.



Unshaven, hollow-eyed like a ghost, my brother lay there on a narrow wire frame, which was supposed to be a bed, in a large ward surrounded by several scores of silent or groaning people. He was still alive, but it looked as though he was near his end.

This was where I saw the so-called revolution at its meanest and stupidest, which was nothing but the seamy side of war, retaliation, retribution, reaction. Formerly the rank and file had a hard time of it; now it was to be the officers' turn. Not that the rank and file had any better time of it. The commandant of the hospital was an unleashed corporal who presumably to-day has found an ideal spot for the exercise of his talents as an overseer in some concentration camp. What he formerly took out of the common private he now gave the officers a taste of, and the staff doctor dared not make a fuss or else he would be treated as a reactionary. From this lowest form of subaltern revolt it was only a step to the new domination of the generals, who calmly exterminated the few idealists of the German Revolution, and the above-described corporals with quick and easy gusto adjusted themselves to the new targets without a single qualm.

At this point, however, it was still in its radical phase, and in the worst stage of its abuses. The order of the day was 'same grub for every one.' My brother, whose digestive organs were full of bone splinters, had a daily ration of *sauerkraut* and rancid bacon prepared for him, a single mouthful of which would have spelled death. For there was no longer a 'preferential tariff.' Well, I had not been four years at the front for nothing, and though I was an officer my own men had elected me to the Soldiers' Council. The conversation which I had alone with the hospital dictator is one that I have reason to believe he will have remembered.

Shortly afterwards we moved my brother to a private



hospital run by Catholic nurses, where they kept on operating until they had completely dismantled and then reassembled his rear, as if on a conveyor belt.

I left Bremen, in whose Ratskeller the poet Hauff dreamed away so many peaceful hours, in the same comfortable way as I had reached it. My mother stayed on there and nursed her slowly convalescing son back to health. It is worth noting that to-day he too is an exile, in Ankara, where he is revealing in the Turkish language and to the culture-famished Asiatics an understanding for Johann Sebastian Bach. That episode in Bremen finally wiped the Great War off the slate for me, and I jumped without a pause and with both feet into the stream of life, fortunately not knowing whither it was carrying us.

## § 2

Of the poets and painters, the leading artists of this period, several died insane. But that is not to be held against either their artistic endeavour or passion. Even a great master of those days, the sculptor Wilhelm Lehmbruck, put a gas-tube in his mouth one dark winter's morning in Berlin. That is how they found him in his studio, surrounded by his statues. The nerves of an artist are infinitely delicate antennæ—to use a technical comparison applicable only in part—which can easily be wrecked or annihilated by the tremendous high-tension voltage they are called upon to register. There have always been men of this self-consuming type, like Kleist, Byron, Schumann, Edgar Allan Poe, alongside those who were able to embrace, balance, and overcome the world, like Goethe, Leonardo, Walt Whitman. Dante bore his banishment. Heine died of his. The poets and artists of this turning-point in the world's history, before and after the war, sensed the coming revolution, the revaluation of all values, in their every fibre,



and many of them sang pæans to it or proclaimed it, although it cut the very ground from under their feet and jeopardized their activity. In art there rages continuously the elemental conflict between preservation of form and the recreation of form—tradition and upheaval—and out of their mighty synthesis lasting works are born.

But now that conflict flared to the point of explosion, of insanity, and it burst out in a variety of absurdly charming forms and phenomena, nearly all of which had a millenarian, world-redeeming, messianic tinge to them and were filled with religious yearning. Even in the most arrant nonsense a certain thirst after God, after a new perception and reverence of a creative being, was expressed. Strange as it may sound, when Kurt Schwitters, a crazy painter, pasted moustache lifters and trusses, real hair and rusty bits of wire-netting, on his pictures; when Paul Klee designed his fragile colour fantasies, which made one think of deep-sea aquaria; when the poet August Stramm, a postmaster run wild (he fell in Russia), wrote dramas in which each person had only one word to utter and the dialogue consisted of these being shouted in spasmodic sequence—they all were striving under the pressure of a metaphysical bewilderment or obsession. To this was added a great measure of neurotic weakness and frenzy, a terror of reality, an escape from facts. It may well be that many of those who survived the war suffered from oversensitiveness and were unable to find their proper way back into life.

With us—by that I mean the people with whom I felt I belonged—it was different. We felt, on the contrary, a certain increased impetus in our powers of resistance—at any rate, in our physical vigour. For all its ardent zeal and deadly earnestness, the whole artistic, intellectual, political, human upheaval into which we plunged was a tremendous lark to



us, a gigantic spree, a colossal adventure, an enormous burst of vitality. Coming as it did, after the chaotic monotony of the war, it was above all blissfully constructive and creative. We acted like fools and played billiards with world problems until many an old green baize cloth went to shreds. But we always kept the one great goal in our minds and headed for it. It was to find a new truth, a new and adequate axle for life, a new criterion for everything, by means of which our disjointed times could recover their balance. To what depths this renewal would have to go, how complete and fundamental it would have to be, of that we had no clear idea at the time, but naturally we were beguiled and enchanted by everything radical, bold, and tempestuous. *The Beginning, The Departure, The Advance, The Storm, The Torch, Action*—those were the names of several dozens of publications and groups of radical artists and writers, all of whom, despite the wide swathe that some of them had cut, maintained a certain standing.

We too, the group of friends with whom I was now living, had our own paper, which we ourselves printed, published, and edited. It was called *The Tribunal*. It appeared in Darmstadt, that drowsy little capital of our former Grand Duke, and it was one of the wildest papers. Yet it won a reputation for itself in post-war Germany because it was completely independent of all higher authority and really provided a hearing for the voice of revolutionary youth. For about two years it sat in judgment on the world, with a mercilessness tempered only by humour, until increasing numbers of the famous and already successful authors of the time took it up and began to write for it. Then it became boring and went to pieces.

But as long as we put it out ourselves it had a face of its own. We attacked everything which seemed to us rotten, obsolete, retrograde: the philistine burghers, the academic sclerosis



of science, political indifference, the lethargic obtuseness and corruption of the Press. We put forward a quickened, free, and lighthearted way of life, after sweeping away the old caste system and the desiccated morals of the *bourgeoisie*. We were outspoken, and we became a bogey, a red rag to public opinion, and roused a storm of indignation, especially in the Press of the middle classes. The sharpest attacks and the most virulent pamphlets against us we concocted ourselves. We imitated the style and mental processes of our adversaries down to the last detail, and we signed these diatribes with pseudonyms and had them hawked at the newspaper stalls. These tracts, so full of unction and fine phrases, giving vent to the wrath and disgust of solid citizens, were widely bought, and the income from them financed our own next issue. They provided us with the absolute triumph of satire when it transpired that we ourselves had written the tirades to which we then retorted with such seriousness and vigour, thereby reducing our enemies to absurdity and ridicule.

### § 3

Our group was blown together by a favourable wind. Most of us had been in the war, but had met each other only after it was over. We were a conglomeration of still undeveloped talents, young writers, painters, musicians, students, without any party affiliations, bound together by a common outlook on life. There was Carlo M., our editor-in-chief, to whom, because of his temperament, we gave the nickname of a well-known comedy figure, Mr Yellalot. Even during the last weeks of the war he pulled off a bold stroke in recapturing single-handed his battery's lost guns, for which he was personally decorated by the Emperor. There was Theo H., with his scar-slashed face, a lieutenant and noted patrol-leader,



twice mentioned in Army dispatches, who rattled off his discourses on Greek philosophy or the Gnostics in the tone of a military report. There was also the lyric poet Schiebelhuth, the long roll of whose verses reverberated through the moonlit nights like the monotonous howl of a wolfhound; he had fought with a Bavarian Alpine Corps in the Dolomites, was blasted off a cliff, and had hung, half shot to pieces, on a tree root over an abyss more than three thousand feet deep. And Egon, the Austrian landowner from Braunau, Hitler's birthplace, a first lieutenant and an airman, who had crashed twice and escaped once in a parachute from a burning captive balloon and then, after leading the students in the Munich uprising, had to flee the city by night.

We had, God knows, acquitted ourselves of our indebtedness to our country. But that was over now, it had to be over, and it mattered not in the least how it had come to an end. The world was too big for resentment. In that we knew that we shared the opinion of the saner part of our people. We wanted to move on into a new era; we wanted to wipe out once and for all the war and everything that had led up to it. Naturally we found ourselves in sharpest conflict with all exasperated and disgruntled people who felt that they had been cheated out of their privileges and who sought to lay the blame for this on every one in the world save themselves. We knew exactly who our enemies were. We were familiar with them from the battlefield. They were not the highest in rank, nor the lowest; they were found wherever there was a small, petty official to envy the next one higher up, wherever a man wanted to appear more than he was, wherever anyone was intent on avenging himself because of any lack imposed on him by nature, the course of events, or his father's status in society. Now they poured into the ranks of the Volunteer Corps, the Black Guard, and the secret Vigilante societies. One of my



friends from the latter days of the war was a harmless youth of nineteen who had seen action too late to get a lieutenant's rank or a decoration. Now, after coming back home, he had to hear his father, a pharmacist in Kiel, tell him at every meal that he had accomplished nothing and that the better classes were done for in any case. So he joined the "Oberland" Volunteer Corps because in it one could subsequently be promoted and decorated, even despite the fact that it meant fighting against his own people. He had worked himself into a general mood of hatred and revenge in which any means seemed legitimate. He was one of the first ones I saw going about with a swastika.

Between such people and us there was no bridge, and we battered each other until the fur flew. We were fierce anti-militarists, though our inner group of collaborators possessed a total of thirty-eight high war decorations. At the same time we had no use whatsoever for the suicidal form of pacifism which allows an opponent to have weapons and sits waiting by until he chooses to use them. We were all in our twenties, in good physical training, and one of our favourite songs was that verse of Liliencron:

Where men are roughhousing  
You're sure to find me,  
And where they're carousing  
There I'll drink for three.  
\*  
Halli and Hallo.

Halli and Hallo—it was a joy to be alive. It was hard either to drink us under the table or to intimidate us with fists. We even learned how to duel with sabres in order to be ready to meet the challenges of the reactionary students. So that we were not open to charges of cowardice or lack of manliness. Nor could they get at us with anti-Semitism, because it happened that none of us were Jews or at most had only a Jewish grandparent. In those days they had not yet been disinterred.



Yet I recall a little incident which is graven deep in my memory. It occurred in the big auditorium of the university in Frankfurt, a few months after the end of the war. A meeting of students had been called in order to invite them to join the Volunteer Corps and help to fight the striking or locked-out workmen in the Ruhr. I am no longer able to state why they were striking, whether they were in the right or not and whether things might have turned out better for Germany if they had succeeded in putting through their political demands at that time (surely it could have been no worse). But the process of hounding them down and agitating against them was loathsome. The Rector made a speech, oozing with demagoguery, in which he promised all sorts of exemptions from examinations to the students who would volunteer. Several thousand unthinking youngsters joyfully responded to his call.

I could not restrain myself from uttering a protest. I stood up and yelled, "These Volunteer Corps are a disgrace to our country, an insult to our war dead. The workers in the Ruhr were our comrades in the trenches, and whoever shot at them is no soldier but a murderer!"

Thousands of heads turned as one man in my direction. The whole mass of them sprang to their feet and rushed threateningly at me, and all their faces seemed to be distorted into one single grimace. There were already concealed baiting cries in the air of, "The Jew! The coward! Paid agent!" Any argument, any opposition, was out of the question. I was slung like a bundle through the length of the hall and hurled out of the door with one gigantic sweep. I limped for a week afterwards. As I was making my precipitate exit I saw my friend Carlo on the other side of the hall, where I could not reach him. His face was bright red, and he was laying about him vigorously but was being overcome by the same prepon-



derance of force. We laughed a great deal later on over this painful incident, but it had been an extremely clear and instructive eye-opener. Whoever has stood alone in the face of an outburst of mob rage—later I experienced it in more serious situations—knows what he may expect. He knows that there is no mercy, no pity, unless he gives in and yells with the rest. He must know whether his goal is worth that risk.

And we did know. We knew exactly what we were after. We simply believed that it was more important to get rid of the abuses in our own country than to howl about the Versailles Treaty. We were convinced that a later and saner generation would realize that it was unworkable and would revoke it. And we did not dream of revenge or world domination but of world union: of a supernational union of all intellectual, human, and economic power, to combat stupidity, oppression, and greed.

We were right. The solution we desired was the only right one, in spite of the fact that external developments appeared to prove us in the wrong. We were too weak, because we were too few and because the times were weighted down by the masses, dragged to earth by some law of gravitation. We shall be in the right when the raw materials of this epoch are reshaped, and we shall be numbered with those to whom the future belongs; not to the abused masses and their amplified loud-speaker Cæsars, but to the people throughout all the world, the salt of the earth.

#### § 4

I lived for a while in a little attic room, in the middle of a steep gable on the Kraemergasse, in Heidelberg. The house belonged to one Elesser, a dancing master, and my first



attempts at playwriting were made to the accompaniment of a piano entirely out of tune, to the unholy tones of which, rendered by the sausage-like fingers of his eldest daughter, young shop assistants and typists were initiated into the mystery of the waltz. Round the corner was the Café Wachter, a thoroughly disreputable place where one could get a drink at any hour of the night. It was also the meeting-place of those royal merchants who were plugging the hole in the West, which meant that they were taking advantage of the ambiguous customs and trade regulations of the occupied zone of western Germany to do illegal export and profiteering business of all kinds. Their favourite articles of commerce were salvarsan and other German chemicals that could easily be hidden in jam jars. The greasy marble tops of the café tables were their principal ledgers; they were covered with columns of numbers written in indelible pencil and among them, during moments of abstraction or deep meditation, obscene little figures were drawn. These marble tops were the source of particularly bitter memories because I shattered one when, in a rather drunken state, I jumped up on a table to recite a newly composed poem. The poem crashed with me and the table, and my friends carried me on the remnants of the marble top down to the Neckar, where I tried to preach to the fishes. But I had to pay for the marble slab, and for years I groaningly sent instalments on the debt. That was one way in which I gained an insight into the economic structure of a coffee-house business.

Apart from that, political economy had little charm for me, and æsthetics too seemed to me to be more or less lifeless, covered over with dust and enfeebled by theories, and I no longer had the patience to remain the necessary time to acquire a degree. I was determined to make my way in the theatre and to earn my daily bread as a free-lance writer. My



daily bread was for the time being a fairly episodic institution, and for the next few years it was subject to the whims of accident or of Providence. In Mannheim, a neighbouring industrial city, a cabaret had been founded with the backing of a couple of snobs. It was named The Green Scream, no one knew why. It called itself the "incubator of the art of modern recitation." (Its head became famous later on in Berlin as a *conférencier*, and in 1933, when he was persecuted by the Nazis, he committed suicide.) It was there I made occasional appearances with my guitar, and I sang verses of my own composition to my own tunes and improvised harmony, all of which was paid for in sour wine and liver sausage. I had a similar job later on in Munich with the unforgettable Kathi Kobus, the voluminous proprietress of the Simplizissimus Bar, who was equally well supplied with flesh and knowledge of human nature. My cabaret career in Mannheim came to a sudden and violent end with my presentation of a ballad which bore the title, "The Murder of the Family of a Privy Councillor by a Black Forest Servant-girl, or The Prevalent Insecurity of *Bourgeois* Society about the Year 1919." For some incomprehensible reasons the public did not take to it; a scandal ensued, and out of consideration for the future revenue of the place I was no longer engaged there. Shortly afterwards the whole enterprise closed down.

All the more glorious by contrast were the theatrical evenings or theatre-like performances which we instituted in the suburbs of Heidelberg or excursion places in the vicinity. They became sensations, and soon the whole university in a body would appear wherever we staged one of the fantastic symbolic dramas of the painter Kokoschka or improvised a play on one of the songs of the Swedish poet Bellman or presented *Aucassin and Nicolette* in opera form. Some of these evening shows were worked up during whole



nights of preparation, while in others the run-through, the dress rehearsal, and the performance were simply telescoped into one, according to the amount of time we could spare from our other activities and life. In such cases we made up for our lack of thoroughness or certainty in lines by a corresponding excess of spirits. Usually our box-office receipts failed to cover the cost of the drinks. But I am free to say that more dramatic talent was poured out on these evenings than I have seen on all the great stages of the various world capitals put together. We invented recurrent characters, as, for example, the figure of the Icelandic professor, Penguin Pattattah, who had read everything and solved all problems with the same eternally unvaried cackling chatter. In him we burlesqued various academic celebrities as well as the intellectual giants of the day, Oswald Spengler, Count Keyserling, the Stefan George circle, or the Freudians.

And yet for all our want of respect what we did was more in tribute than in satire. Our principal actress was Mimi, also known as the Venus of the Middle Rhine—a model for a group of modern painters from the near-by city of Karlsruhe who were distinguished for being particularly mad—and a friend of the poet Klabund. Later it was Cilly, a genuine gipsy, who told fortunes in coffee-houses and for the uncertain possession of whom we fought like so many jealous young cocks until we had all been through some awful experiences with her. I can recall one nocturnal battle that flared up on her account in the cloister-like studio of our friend Fraenger, whose external appearance, with a pompous “bay window,” ruddy complexion, and black shaggy mane, made us think of Balzac or the drunken Hafiz. Like a choleric turkey he gobbled furiously in his library after Cilly, in a fit of discontent with civilization, had swept his entire collection of books off the shelves and thrown his drawings, some modern art



papers which displeased her, out of the window. And he suddenly hurled a carving-fork with a war whoop at his best friend Carlo, who was at the time dancing a foxtrot with Cilly on his writing-table. "The devil, I missed his eye," was the only excuse he proffered as his victim pulled the fork from his bleeding cheek. Cilly continued to devastate our homes and interfere with our harmony for some time. She drank like a fish, stole like a magpie, scattered all the bad gifts of Pandora, and the wilder she behaved the more violently we fought over her, in whose bestiality we thought we were paying homage to the "elemental feminine."

Such orgies of barbarism, which never led to serious rows among us, went hand in hand with frequent outbursts in the childish pleasure of risking our lives, a kind of challenging bravado natural to youth, but which overcame particularly us, who had been salvaged out of the war, as a kind of mad temptation. To juggle a bottle of wine on some ridgepole at four in the morning, or to balance ourselves on the railing of a bridge, or to dive under a motor-boat in motion—such things we did as though we were determined to force destiny to confess that it had no power over us or that it still had much in store for us.

Once we went into the suburbs to see an open-air performance at night of the famous tightrope dancer Stey-Knie, who offered to pick up any mature man in the audience and take him on his shoulders across the high wire, which was nearly thirty-five feet above the ground with no net under it. I offered myself, and after gulping down three double brandies I started off on my dizzy trip. I was scared stiff, but there was no turning back because I had made bets on it. It was ghastly. Half-way over he called to me not to be alarmed, that he was just going to have a little fun. Whereupon he pretended to waver, lose his balance, seemed to be about to fall,



while I clung to him convulsively, my legs wrapped around his bull neck. I have no idea how I got down.

There was, of course, a lot of vanity involved in escapades like this; we wanted to impress ourselves and others, but it had nothing to do with any contempt or scorn of life, which no one could have loved more ardently or avidly than we did in those days. We took it seriously, like a real love. The nonsense I have described was more in the nature of an arabesque, a marginal note to our real activity.

We did not make things easy for ourselves. Even the problem of our material existence was hard enough to solve. Our works went the rounds of the editors, and for every meagre acceptance there were ten refusals. At the time of the cherry harvest we were employed as pickers in the surrounding villages, and we carried heavy baskets to town. In winter we often shovelled snow. Each one of us worked towards his pledged goal like a man possessed. We sharpened and fired our ambitions by mutual and merciless criticism and deadly satire. It seemed easier to stand up to the most awe-inspiring Berlin critics than to face the devastating scorn of your best friends who made use of every little shortcoming to indict you as a hack writer, a dabbler, as being banal and completely lacking in talent.

From another angle we were as expansive in our enthusiasms as Negroes. A really fine performance, an acquaintanceship with an artistic or intellectual person of true individual quality and size, could send us off into a frenzy of joy like the effect of the appearance of Father Divine. When Paul Hindemith, the leading young composer of our generation, came over from near-by Frankfort to play his own works on the viola we gave him the wildest ovation, and we were all but ready to throw the carpers and the head-shakers among the somewhat bewildered and unreceptive public from



the window of the hall. After the concert the lion of the evening was dragged off to the Blue Pike, a little tavern on the quay, over the door of which some diminutive letters indicated that the German poet Jean Paul had once lived there, and huge letters told that some general or other had spent a night on the premises. In the low-ceilinged little taproom, where a mere handful of daring natives were the only clients besides us and where the wooden benches were set all round the whitewashed walls, there was a piano. Hindemith initiated us into the technique of sea-lion piano-playing and also that of the super-gramophone. He transformed his hands into fins, slyly tucking his thumbs underneath so that he could artfully reach certain special notes, and in this way, with the flap of his fins like a sea-lion in a circus, he played popular modern songs or took off Richard Wagner. He was also able to parody any other well-known composer or famous virtuoso in the sea-lion manner. And his super-gramophone consisted of piling as many records as possible on one another until the top one reeled round like a turn-table loosened from its moorings and uttered uncanny, screeching, chaotic noises. This we played afterwards to the uninitiated as Stravinsky's, Schoenberg's, or Hindemith's latest work, and were right royally amused by the serious faces they pulled, the knowing nodding of their heads and their completely senseless expressions of recognition and admiration. Whoever was not taken in by it was correspondingly honoured and respected by us.

How impressed we were by one elegant lady, who bore the French Christian name of Lou and whom we nicknamed the Silver Ship, when, after listening for a brief while to one of our much-vaunted 'newest works,' she calmly emptied her wineglass into the gramophone—an act which presumably also expressed her opinion of the wine to which we had treated her. She then ordered a peach punch to be prepared, with



Moselle wine and five bottles of champagne. She was not niggardly. She was the brightest star in a summer sky strewn with constellations; she shot into our consciousness, passed by, and disappeared like a comet.

"Making port from north-north-east," was the telegraphic message of our friend the poet Klabund, in notifying us of her impending arrival, "with a heavily laden Silver Ship in tow." Naturally we were waiting at the station and burning up with curiosity when the Berlin train pulled in. She was a young widow and immensely rich. Her father owned silver mines. Her late-lamented husband had left her several factories. She was pretty, elegant, not too thin, not inexperienced, and not even stupid; she was all that anyone could ask for. That she was superficial, something of a snob, and that her main quality was an insatiable curiosity, without having any real core of intellect, character, or feelings, was something of which we were not immediately aware or did not wish to take notice. For the time being it only enhanced her charm. She had a passion for young men, especially if they were in the way of showing signs of unusual talent, and it was safe to assume that they would one day be famous. And that was the very thing each one of us in our group believed of himself.

The Silver Ship was richly provided with a crew ready to sail at a moment's notice. The one read her his poems, the other showed her his drawings. The student of physics explained his experiments to her, as well as his future inventions, to the point of explosion; the politically minded filled her ears with the din of their arguments and dragged her to surging mass meetings where they taught her to say, "I protest against the disgraceful conduct of the discussion!" A Ukrainian sociologist nearly ruined her nervous system by a stuttering exposition of his new concept of the surplus-values theory.



But she listened to each one, each felt that she understood him, and she was inevitably seized with a desire to marry each one—the expression of an abrupt surge of curiosity, infatuation, and Christian charity. For we were all poor, and every one of us knew that we had years ahead of us in which we should have to wrestle with a thousand various needs, that we should have to breast our way through all kinds of strength-robbing side-issues before our talents would be allowed fully to unfold themselves and we could really devote our lives to the work for which we felt we had been born. There was not a single one in our group who did not feel the pull, for a few days at least, of the temptation—yes, the dazzling dream—to accept a secure existence with a pretty wife thrown into the bargain. It would mean a pleasant life, the possibility of free achievement, independence, and all the impressive advantages of wealth. She herself was only too prone to dream of playing the part of a Mæcenas-like beloved, nourishing in her bosom a young genius; her intentions were really fine, and after all she had just as much right to a certain measure of ambition and vanity as we had. She was actually more thrilled by the idea of possessing a blossoming, rising, future ‘great man’ and of contributing practical aid to the development of his greatness and to getting him on his feet, than of cherishing a ready-made, fully hatched, signed and sealed genius, whose product would be known and guaranteed. This fine trait of bold adventurousness on her part must not be forgotten. Nor yet the punch parties to which she invited us, the picnics with the bottles and baskets of provender, the heavenly cray-fish and trout feasts on outings in the vicinity, and the discreet wiping out of debts chalked up at the Blue Pike, for which we indiscreetly embraced her to show our gratitude.

But none of us married her. A healthy instinct of self-preservation kept us all from the temptation of artificially



cutting short the hard years, no matter how we cursed them, and exchanging them for an all too early downy couch, on which one can all too easily lounge a life away. Each one of us was in love with her at one time or another, and presumably she was always a little in love with us all. We suspected and elbowed each other out of the way in turn until the physicist, our inventor, suddenly announced his engagement to her. This was least expected from his quarter, for he had been devoting himself to a charming but poor young pianist. Presumably a jealous quarrel had led to a sudden breaking off of their relations.

But it lasted only a little while. When Lou's family arrived in their Rolls-Royce, with gout-ridden Papa in buckskin spats and all the rest, and they hauled the young inventor out of the acid-teeming atmosphere of his tiny den to take him to an ultra-expensive, ultra-stiff, and ultra-fashionable hotel to train him to be a prince consort, his conscience began to prick. At the opulent banquet to which we were all invited, and at which we thought we cut highly elegant figures in our hired dress suits, he drank himself full to the brim. Then in a speech at once coherent and difficult to understand he announced his engagement to the pianist. The relatives of the Silver Ship toasted him because they thought he was speaking about Lou, and they did not grasp the meaning of our immoderate yells of triumph. But the Silver Ship herself realized the situation and handled it in the most charming and gracious way. She even went so far as to provide for the repairs in his apartment, which had been devastated and burned by acids, and she covered the damage he had inflicted on instruments in the university through his too-fervent experimentations.

Then she set her sails and slipped away as she had come. We all saw her off at the station and waved her out of sight with hearts a little saddened yet a little relieved. And our life



went on, without any Silver Ship, without any money, but with the well-known silver lining in the sky, which was to be obscured only years afterwards by the slowly gathering storm-clouds of our destinies.

## § 5

Several years later we were all in the Blue Pike together saying good-bye to one another. In the meantime I had long since broken away, had inadvertently taken a wife, and was already divorced. I had had my first play fail in Berlin, I had worked in a mine in Narvik, and had tried my hand at various more or less dangerous occupations. I had come back to Heidelberg for a short time to work on a new play. It was a warm evening in early summer, and the whole town was in a state of nervous, hectic excitement. On that day Walther Rathenau, the Foreign Minister of the German Republic, had been assassinated. He had been one of the few among our statesmen who enjoyed respect and recognition abroad. A group of young right-wing radicals, conspirators, had shot him in Berlin. From notes made available later on—one of them published a book—it appeared that they themselves did not really know why they did it. They acted more out of bewilderment, despair, and blind fanaticism than in accordance with any conscious plan. But their act aroused a fearful response among other circles of young people who were just as bewildered, exasperated, just as lacking in direction and leadership.

The Corps and other fraternities of reactionary students marched through the streets in torchlight processions. They sang as they went an incredibly low, coarse, hate-intoxicated couplet:

Walther Rathenau has croaked: that's fine!  
The God-damned, filthy Jewish swine.



We sat in the Blue Pike and discussed a plan of action for the following day, to put through the memorial service being organized by the Government, to fight down any opponents from the university, and to eliminate them. We went into action, and we suppressed them in a way which cost our friend Carlo his university connexion, a lawsuit, and a suspended court sentence. In those days we were still able to assert ourselves, because we could still believe in our victory and in a power which stood behind us and whose vanguard we were. As a matter of fact, even then we were standing alone, lamentably deserted by the weak leaders of the state, the political parties, and the stubborn elder statesmen. There was still a stretch of time ahead of us, a decade, in the course of which each one of us made his path in his own way, pushing forward, having success, doing his utmost. But the tide which washed the streets of Heidelberg with its filthy waters on this evening of Rathenau's murder rose and rose, sweeping over all dikes and resistance, fed by idiots and suicides at home and abroad, until it swept over our heads or knocked us over and cast us up on foreign shores. It sought out every one of us who had offered any resistance, and there was not a single one who tried to evade his destiny. Carlo, who under the Republic had become one of the leading young political figures but who was throttled and checked by sluggish indecision among his own followers, survived five years of concentration camp. Theo, because he attempted to organize an opposition party, acquired an inside knowledge of a workhouse in the Third Reich. Egon, a representative of Republican Germany at the League of Nations, was obliged to remain in Geneva as an official after Germany's withdrawal. In the absence of weightier international problems, he ran the bureau for combating the white-slave traffic. For in Geneva, at the moment of the occupation of Austria and Czecho-



Slovakia, this was evidently considered the most pressing problem in Europe. Hindemith is teaching music composition at Yale University in the United States, and at the present time Zuckmayer is chopping firewood in Vermont, boiling his morning coffee, and sitting at his desk.

An intermission? Curtain? The end of an act? A scene-change? The play is far from being over.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Why Should I Weep . . .*

TO storm Berlin was not as easy as to survive the Great War. This city gobbled up talent and human energy with unheard-of voracity, only to digest them, chew them fine, or spit them out again with equal haste. She sucked in all upward-striving elements in Germany with an ever-increasing centripetal power, the genuine with the false, the duds with the direct hits, only to turn a cold shoulder to them and make them feel her complete indifference. So long as you did not possess Berlin you spoke of the city as of a much-to-be-desired woman, whose coldness and coquetry were well known and whom you maligned the more if your prospects were slight. To us she was indeed very like a millionaire's wife to a coal-heaver. We called her arrogant, snobbish, a *parvenue*, soulless, hysterical. In secret, though, each one of us saw in her the goal of all his dreams: to one her curving form appeared revealed in a rose-coloured *négligé*; to another she showed her boyish legs in slim black silk. Immoderate dreamers saw both aspects, and her reputation for cruelty was a strong stimulant to imagination. Each one wanted to force his way in, and she slammed the door in every face. Even so the half-baked, the flashy, were better able to slip through a crack and inveigle themselves temporarily into her favour, only to land all the deeper in the dump pile in the back yard as soon as their hollowness and impotence became evident.

The others, those who really had something substantial to offer, had a hard time of it at the outset. They were made to feel all her mistrust and capriciousness, her claws and teeth,



and usually they were brutally repulsed and showered with filth before they could win a legitimate right of entry. But he who succeeded could count on coming in for a triumph of Roman magnificence and splendour. If he possessed Berlin the world was at his feet. Yet he was obliged, and this was the wholesome part of it, to keep reconquering his position if he were to hold it. The shouting applause of to-day was no guarantee against a mute inglorious grave to-morrow. After a success you had to have your telephone number changed to obtain five minutes' peace, and after a failure you were blanketed on that very evening by the great white silence, snowed under beneath darkness and cold. But it was always possible in another dash to reach the Pole and eat your breakfast in the early morning sunlight.

Whoever has lived in Berlin will know what I have in my mind's eye when I speak of breakfast-time, that lucent, transparent half-light of dawn following a night sat through and drunk through after the opening of a play; when Johnny, at Schwannek's Artists' Club, opened the blinds and you saw, through the clouds of cigarette-smoke, that the window-panes were coated mother-of-pearl and outside *l'heure bleue* was on the wing; or if you were at the Zoo Station or out in Grunewald in spring, in that garden restaurant called Uncle Tom's Cabin, drinking your hot coffee amid piles of newspapers in which you could read your weal or your woe, see yourself carried up to heaven or cast down into hell, and have it all in black and white to carry home. That was Berlin; and then there were other nights when you worked through without going to bed at all and fell asleep next morning standing in an overcrowded tram. . . .

No, there was no lazy credit to be had, no resting on wilted laurels, no premature adipose tissue. The air was fresh and at the same time had a nip in it, like that of New York in



late autumn. You did not need much sleep and you were seldom tired. Nowhere else did you ever feel so fit, nowhere else were you so hardy or able to take so many blows on the chin without being counted out. And if you were lucky in this fierce prize fight for the palm of Berlin, which the stiff angel on the Victory Column wields like a broom, this struggle became part of the time in your life when every blow on the head or punch in the pit of your stomach made you a little more wide awake and helped you to see things a little more clearly.

I had written a play quite outside the usual theatrical technique, a mixture of lyricism and dramatic broadsides. All religious, social, erotic, and psychological problems of the world were dealt with in an obstinately self-determined form and in an untold number of scenes, the sequence of which could be grasped only by experts. I had submitted it to the Berlin State Theatre, which was at that time the most enterprising stage in Germany, without any serious hope of getting a response. No one in Berlin knew of my dramatic onslaught or attempted to further it except one young director, Ludwig Berger. But one could hardly assume that he would be able to interest anyone in it. One day, however, I received a telegram from the Intendant or Chief of the State Theatre, Leopold Jessner, with whose name was linked a glorious train of the most significant and exciting modern productions. He wired that my play was accepted and for me to come to Berlin for rehearsals.

What that meant cannot be put into words. It was not a public success, but at the moment it was more than that. It was the springboard, the stirrup, the open door, the first advance payment, and a railway ticket. . . . One knew that thousands of plays were submitted without getting any consideration. I was not yet twenty-four, and it was barely two



years since I crawled out of the trenches. "We are happy," the polite theatre chief telegraphed, "to present your promising play as the first production of the season."

## § 2

I sat in the train and was convinced that every one must see the mark of genius on my brow. But my fellow-travellers did not so much as look at me; they never even sensed who was sitting in the corner of the compartment munching an apple. They did nothing but rail against the lack of heating in the trains, the Government, and the Jews.

Berlin still bore the stamp of a lost war. People were nervous and ill-natured; the streets were dirty, thronged with maimed beggars; traffic was intermittent and often paralysed by fierce strikes. War profiteers in 'tango' trousers and natty little belts across their tight-fitting lounge suits made of gaudily checked materials in striking colours, verging on orange and lilac; literary fakes with horn-rimmed spectacles and their so-called 'Bolshevik haircuts,' long locks carefully sleeked back, with the nape cropped short and heavily powdered—these were filling the cafés and setting the tone. The tone was consciously cynical, hard-boiled, uncouth, covering up a permanent sense of insecurity in an insolently cocksure way.

Why should I weep when come to the parting of the ways;  
On the next street another will answer my gaze,

were the words of the most popular song. They bawled it arrogantly in every parlour; they dithered with hysteria when the new dollar rate was published. When the first quarrel with a sweetheart came they blew out their brains. Yet despite all this there was already in the air that incomparable feeling of intensity, the breath of a passionate upward surge,



which was to make Berlin within a few short years the most interesting, the most exciting metropolis in Europe.

This first made itself felt in its artistic and cultural life, above all in the theatres. These outdid each other in brilliant, sensational, daring productions. There was a generation of extraordinary actors and outstanding directors at work. True talent and achievement dominated a flood of trash and bluff. The Press was cruel, pitiless, aggressive, full of bloodthirsty sarcasm, and yet not really disheartening. For behind all its malice there was a constant urge to quality, a readiness to discover and spur on any creative effort growing along fresh lines. The sharpest criticism, the most scornful rejection, might have a temporarily devastating effect; yet it left the door open for you to stage a come-back with some new work and insist on a hearing, on asserting yourself. The public, too, played the game; they adored sarcastic sallies and the uproar of a juicy theatrical row where they behaved as though it were a prize fight, but they also had a capacity for what was strong, potent, with creative power, and they were ready, after a little self-defensive sparring, to be seduced, enchanted, and carried away. Berlin smelled of success, so a man was willing to put up with the filth and the cold which was part of it.

It was a chill, foul winter morning when I, dragging my bag but with the step of a conqueror, left the Anhalter Station in Berlin. The wet streets were crowded with people, their overcoat collars turned up, hurrying to their offices. I was buffeted about, run into, snapped at. "Watch yer step, will yer, or you'll get a free ride to Grieneisen's." I did not grasp the full charm of this greeting until I learned that Grieneisen was the name of the biggest Berlin undertaking establishment. But I was instantly pleased by everything: the noise in the streets, the crowding at tram stops, the sight of the taxi-drivers in their leather jackets slouching over their wheels,



taking swigs from their thermos flasks and making comments on the events of the day in the most improbable combinations of language. It was all sensational and refreshing in its effect.

In the offices of the State Theatre I was the object of many disapproving looks on the part of many officials in many waiting-rooms, until finally one gentleman, who looked as though he were still charged with the office of distributing decorations to forgotten participants in the campaign of 1870, gave me a pass to the dress rehearsal of the latest production. The rehearsal was supposed to have begun. With my bag still in my hand, and having hastily breakfasted on a double brandy, I tore to the theatre, which I entered as if it were the sacristy of a cathedral. They had, of course, not even thought about starting the rehearsal, but as I tiptoed into the orchestra I heard such a piercing, tigerish yell issue from the stage that I was led to believe the performance must be in full swing, for with it came a volley of Shakespearean curses and execrations. "Foul assassins! Mercenary wretches!" and so on. But it was only a quarrel and, as I then discovered, nothing out of the ordinary in theatrical life. The actor Kortner was arguing with some employees who, since they derived from the Imperial era, were maliciously engaged in sabotage against the new regime, and as he (Kortner) was in the costume and make-up of Richard the Third, the vocabulary of that monarch flowed naturally out of his mouth. It was then and there that I saw for the first time an example of that remarkable magic, the metamorphosis which allows an actor to be almost physically at one with his part, which injects the crooked back and clubfoot of his dramatic counterpart into his very soul and imbues him with a language as truly as if it were a blood-transfusion. He raged so fearfully up there on the stage that I was as completely fascinated as by the sight of a madman.



In the half-light of the orchestra there were some softly whispering, agitated groups standing round. In front of the footlights there paced up and down, with the swaying step of a circus elephant, a strangely distorted figure, reflected larger than life-size, who now and then raised his hands propitiatingly, followed by a helpless gesture in which he hid one hand behind his bald head and plastered the other against his rear. That was the famous theatrical head, Leopold Jessner.

"Gentlemen," he began, in the tone of a diplomatic address, but then he stopped, merely raised his hands once more like a benediction and abruptly vanished from the scene. Whereupon a remarkable calm fell, although it was only temporary and for the sake of appearances. I had, as I realized later on, been a witness to my first view of appeasement. For here, within the limited frame of a theatrical enterprise, there was being played in microcosm the whole tragedy of the German Republic, and it was reflected in all of its phases; there was the tough bureaucracy, settled in life jobs from which they could not be discharged, making the most of the leniency of democracy quietly to dig her grave, and there was the militant spirit of a progressive minority, who saw the danger but had not the power to obviate it, and the prudent attempt of a well-meaning, clever, but too weak management to bridge over all these contrasts with tactical skill. To-day those managers of the theatre as well as of the State are out with us, the minority, in exile.

In those days I was still unaware of all that. I was busy absorbing the thrilling atmosphere of the theatre through all my pores, and I abandoned myself completely to the breathtaking impression of that rehearsal. During the breaks and intermissions I dashed round after Jessner, who paced up and down with his strangely elephantine gait and who, just as I was about to catch his attention, would have an idea con-



cerning something quite different. Nevertheless I finally succeeded in getting to speak to him; he greeted me as one might the representative of a foreign Power, and, since he could not remember my name, he introduced me to all his associates in the most amiable way as "our author," so that I myself was soon on the verge of imagining that I had written *Richard the Third* and all the other works of Shakespeare. He beckoned to a young actress who looked most engaging in the costume of a Shakespearean prince, and he explained to me that she was to take the principal part in my play. She was also a newcomer in Berlin, and it was to be her first important appearance.

We sat down together and eyed each other in the semi-darkness between acts, and later we went out to a near-by public house and began to drink some wine. Before long I had recited all of my poems to her; the winter afternoon settled on the roofs, then darkness fell, lamps were turned on, and we were still sitting there when it was nearly time to grow light again.

That night there was a heavy frost in Berlin, glazing the wet streets. Towards morning, as I attempted—still with my bag in hand—to find my way back to the small hotel on the West Side where I had registered, I staggered and reeled, not just from the wine consumed, like some burlesque dancer on a sheet of ice on which there was no possibility of remaining upright without skates. I have never since experienced such slipperiness; I had to feel my way along the walls of buildings and clutch at lamp-posts to keep from constantly landing on my nose. At one street corner there was a clump of laughing and shouting ladies and gentlemen writhing round on top of each other—obviously they also were none too sober—and every time they tried to help one another up they fell down again. Some of them, who gave up the attempt, crawled on



all fours back into the building from which they had emerged; it was a taxi-drivers' eating-place called Mother Maenz's, frequented regularly by a number of artists. As a stranger in town it was my intention to pick my way with elegant equilibrium past the group, but one man who was down on his knees, and holding his bowler hat in his teeth, grabbed my leg so that I was tripped up and landed on him. While we were thus falling one over the other and attempting to get to our feet by catch-as-catch-can tactics the unknown gentleman felt it incumbent on him to introduce himself with due ceremony. "Allow me . . ." said he, sitting down hard on the pavement. "My name is Paul Bildt." He was an actor and happened to be engaged for a part in my play, the script of which he had just received. After some more tumbling about, forward and backward, we abandoned all hope of ever getting up on our hind-legs again and remained seated on the pavement drinking brandy, which was carried out to us, and discussing drama and the theatre until the seats of our trousers froze to the pavement. When the sun rose that morning, melting the ice and covering the city with mud, Berlin was to my mind a conquered province. I sank into bed in a glorious mood.

### § 3

Six weeks later the first catastrophe occurred. It was the opening of my play. I sat, all dressed in ceremonial black, in the official box, feeling, and rightly so, that I was at a funeral. It was snowing outside; cars groped their way forward with difficulty; the theatre slowly filled. From the box one could clearly see the second row in the orchestra where the critics took their seats. It was a grisly sight. Many of them, wearing beards and dressed in dinner jackets, looked as though they had risen from the grave to pronounce some



fearful curse. The younger men among them, the progressives, were all over fifty. One of them, no doubt the *doyen* of the corps, came in on the arm of his already white-haired daughter and was lifted into his seat. He used an ear-trumpet. At the extreme right, his face an impenetrable mask, sat Kerr, the most dangerous sharpshooter of them all. At the extreme left sat Jhering with sparkling eyes. He was the dogma-faithful scholar of modern drama. These two lived and wrote their criticisms in intimate enmity, their efforts being primarily directed to make each other ridiculous. One could receive praise only from the one, because that was sure to call down the damnation of the other. The scene was rapidly being transformed into a judicial tribunal.

Beside me in the box were two guests of honour, invited by the head of the theatre: one was the Minister for Home Defence, Noske, an uncouth, ponderous person with the face of a sergeant. Every one knew that, although he was a Social Democrat, he willingly pandered and gave a lift to all reactionary enterprises and that he was in a seventh heaven of flattered happiness when a general condescended to pat him on the back. I hated him and he probably returned my aversion, for after the first act he went away growling and shaking his head. The other guest was the poetess Else Lasker-Schueler, whose lyrics I adored and admired but who proceeded to torture me, as the evening took on increasingly catastrophic proportions, by more and more gently stuffing me with *bonbons* which she produced with much crackling of paper out of an old-fashioned reticule. I loathed sweets, and they made me quite ill, but I was defenceless in the face of her loving-kindness. One single gulp of brandy would have been much better.

Furtively out of sight somewhere in the audience were my parents with some of my friends. They had made the long



journey for the privilege of witnessing their son's disgrace, and, as luck would have it, their seats were alongside those of some outraged bureaucrats who had come in on passes, so that all round them they heard nothing but scolding, hissing, laughter in the wrong places. One lady even turned to my mother with the remark, "This must have been written by some poor idiot." My father left Berlin the next day confirmed in his old fear that I was a hopeless case.

The defeat was absolute. The phrenetic applause of a few youthful enthusiasts could not change the unbroken front of complete and even vociferous rejection of my play on the part of the majority. The Press was devastating, except the extreme radical papers and a few old hot-heads like Maximilian Harden, who was habitually on the other side of everything, and brilliant Siegfried Jacobsohn. They prophesied that I was a rising sun. But for the time being the fog was more powerful. After three performances, the last two of which were played to only a handful of spectators who had drifted in by accident, the play vanished, and my career as a writer was put behind heavy bars for an indeterminate sentence. After the tremendous start and excitement it was as though I had plunged off a high springboard for fancy divers, with all the elegant grace of a star performer, and had landed on my head in a basin. Yet neither my self-confidence nor my appetite was permanently impaired by this hard blow. Now I really went on the warpath, and it never occurred to me to give up. This production was in a way an accolade, and I was now irrevocably a playwright, albeit an unsuccessful one. I remained in Berlin—without money, without a job, without a reputation. And Berlin began to eat me up.



## § 4

Berlin demanded the whole of you. She was not a woman to tolerate any outside *liaisons*. She called for sacrifices and genuine passion. In the courthouse of Jannowitzbrücke my first marriage ended in divorce. It had not lasted even a year and would, in any case, have gone on the rocks sooner or later, but Berlin and the new passion it abounds in hastened the end. And I felt as though I had never known a woman up to then.

Yet I had begun early. "To a man between thirteen and thirty no woman is unattainable," was what I wrote as a school-boy in my diary, after an experience at the Mainz Fair. (To-day I cannot think why I set the age limit so low. Probably for the sake of alliteration. But I should have done better to make it between fifteen and fifty.) The experience had to do with the daughter of a high officer with a devilishly fast reputation, a girl who went about in Russian boots accompanied by a wolfhound. Although she was much my senior, she invited me six times in succession to ride on the scenic railway and afterwards feasted me on ices at the Italian Pietro Gei's stall. All this while my school friends stood by in a malicious group, sarcastic and filled with envy. When I was a boy I fell in love hard and often and used that as a source of uninhibited self-gratification; there were nights when I did not close my eyes, when I wrote poetry, when I rebelled against doing lessons. I was full of obstinacy and carried the tragic weight of the world on my shoulders. That is healthy enough in growing years, even if it does produce dark rings under the eyes, and it is as unavoidable as the mumps or measles.

My first serious incident was as unexpected as a cloudburst, and the aura of happy secrecy enshrouded it. She was a lady



who was passing through town and spent some nights in my parents' house. She soon went away and left behind only a lovely memory and the beneficent pain of parting. Then in a dancing class my heart went up in flames over a young girl of good family, blonde and sentimentally enthusiastic, with an inborn bias for the study of the history of art. We exchanged daily letters although we met every day, and when summer came we took our bicycles of an afternoon and rambled off to some hidden meadow along the Rhine instead of to the tennis courts. There the absence of both of us was noted; we were spied on, reported. A small-town scandal ensued with despairing parents and all the trimmings. They forbade the girl ever to see me again and hastily overwhelmed her with precipitate plans for marriage, whereupon we immediately became secretly engaged. On top of all that the war broke out and raised the childlike romance of our relationship into the realm of the unreal, the heroic, with which, strange to say, the coarse reality of other normal connexions was quite compatible. The remarkable thing, however, is that shortly after the war we really married.

And that was, at bottom, just as senseless as it was typical of our generation. It was an attempt to fly back into the lost paradise of our childhood, to which the war had so abruptly and irrevocably put an end, and it was destined to go awry, for there are no roads back. It was an attempt to realize the desires of a purer, an unclouded time, although they were no longer nourished by our blood. This marriage actually had nothing in common with my real life, which had shot up from roots run wild during and after the war, and that she had no conception of this was probably the basis of her charm. We forced the marriage through and lived for six months in a moon-pale dream which rapidly vanished under the hot blast of Berlin life and came to a prosaic end in a



divorce court. What I was parting from then was not so much love—for the realization of what love was, or could be, was now beginning to dawn on me with overwhelming power—it was everything that meant home, Mother's lap, familiar ways, all that does not grow along with us but which we find again only if we have torn it right out of our heart.

The process of divorce was nothing but a formality, and it has stuck in my memory only because I had to wait in an office and therefore was a witness to the case that preceded mine. It was the divorce of an elderly couple who after fifty years could no longer stand living together. These two old people, whose grown children gave contrasting evidence, poured out such awful, abysmal hatred that they could hardly be restrained from attacking each other. It was worse than murder. They shrieked the most atrocious insults and accusations at one another, and the whole misery of loathsome, callous, embittered lives in a big city was shouted in their brawling voices. All the rage and mortification they had choked down now broke from them in volleys of poison. They were little people pressed together by circumstances and cruelly estranged by lovelessness. Never have I seen anything worse in revenge and in malignity, but the strange part of it was that they looked alike, that they had identical gestures, identical habits, identical modes of expression. In their mouths the Berlin dialect lost all its playful pertness; it became rough, mean, disgusting. Nothing in the world can be so desperately depressing, so hopeless, as low-down speech; the distorting, the maiming of man's supreme gift, the filthy abuse of a divine office.

Perhaps this is the principal reason why the Nazis are intolerable and never can be tolerated. Every time I have heard or read one of their abusive, boasting speeches, whenever I



have become aware of their inflexion and formulation, I have been reminded of that abominable and miserable old couple in the court of Jannowitzbrücke.

In the time after my Berlin fiasco I had ample opportunity to become familiar with the gloomy, stifling elements of a big city, as well as with its sharply biting essential nature, its unexpected whirlpools and gusts of wind. Left over, in any case, from my brief marriage were the two gold wedding-rings which my former wife sent back to me in the most charming way so that I could pawn or sell them. After they were eaten up a few superfluous pieces from my wardrobe found their way to the secondhand clothes dealer, and after that it was no time for comedy. Naturally I never stopped writing, but I neither could nor would feed myself by my pen, for now especially did I scorn all compromise, all attempt at easily marketed potboilers; I was heading for my main goal. Nor should I have been able to adjust myself to a more technically dextrous style without ruining my own capacity for individual expression, which still had to be developed. The fact that I was not living alone softened my sense of misery and frustration, but on the other hand it sharpened my consciousness of need and of material pressure, and within two years everything happened which can make the destiny of young people wonderful, desperate, and full of crisis.

For a few months I held down something in the nature of a regular job, and that was a most dispiriting episode. A well-wisher had obtained for me a miserably paid form of employment in an obscure editorial office, which was supported by some political obscurantists. It was called ELTA, and that stood for Lithuanian Telegraph Agency. What its purpose was, and whether it really had any connexion with the sovereign and economic interests of the little land of Lithuania, which had been erected into an independent state by the Peace



Treaty, or whether it was being used to cover up other intrigues and concealed dealings, I to this day have no certain knowledge.

The 'office' was situated on the top floor of a rear building in a courtyard, in the darkest part of the north side of Berlin, and each morning I had to undertake a journey round the world to reach it. Naturally there was no lift, and the staircase was so dilapidated that it had no banister on the upper floors; consequently only people not subject to vertigo could scale the heights. I sat up there with a thin-lipped secretary; she looked acid, and smelled it too. We had large pots of glue and scissors which we used in handling clippings from papers all over the world about Lithuania's foreign and domestic trade. This information was then tacked together, under the supervision of a dark-complexioned man who turned up twice a week, into rather questionable world telegrams, reports, and newspaper articles, in the statistical compiling of which a cipher more or less was of no importance, and which were obviously subordinated in any case to purposes of anti-Polish propaganda. Poland was the all-powerful neighbour and rival of Lithuania, and even at that time it was the object of a secret Pan-German policy of intrigues.

I learned here how economic statistics can be manipulated by unscrupulous journalists and how little one can rely on the information poured out through the daily papers. The whole business became more and more distasteful to me until one day in a matter of a cipher, which in this era of Hitlerian orations no one would even notice, a dispute flared up; it was when my mysterious boss dictated to me in some connexion the figure of 500,000 tons, and I politely pointed out that in the trade report concerned it was a question of only 50,000. "You write," he barked at me, "what I dictate!" I refused, and he countered with my immediate dismissal, so that I



climbed down the perilous staircase for the last time, breathing freely and bereft of a job.

Other undertakings promised to be more amusing. Since I could ride horseback, Albert Steinrueck, an actor (a magnificent figure from the best days of the German theatre), had me hired as a supernumerary in the UFA Film Studios, where they were just preparing a silent picture on the life of Frederick the Great. I was a soldier once more, although in a by-gone century, and I was lucky enough to serve in an old Prussian cavalry regiment out on the former Imperial Rifle Range and Manœuvre Field when we won the battle of Leuthen over again. We had to sit round waiting far longer than in the Great War. The whole affair was excruciatingly funny. I have rarely heard such delectable, ingenious expressions, especially in the realm of cursing and erotics, as from these former hack drivers, stable boys and dustmen out of whom the Frederickan army was composed. And the stilted actors, swaggering around making a noise like old field-m Marshals and braggarts, were sidesplitting. The high point in the campaign was when, during a run-through of the scenes already taken, a specialist in cultural history discovered that we, the Hussars of old General Ziethen, were wearing the wrong trousers—in fact, some that were in the style of a whole century later—with the result that the entire battle had to be fought again in historically correct breeches and we received correspondingly larger pay.

When the Seven Years War was over I sat about for days in the film exchange, hoping to get a job as a cowboy, cavalry rider, or postilion, but the competition was too great, and I was obliged to abandon this vein of gold, the greater part of the income from which had already been swallowed up by the studio canteen.

One enterprise, the most promising one from the financial



angle, did not materialize, thank God, or else I should not be able to tell about it here. It happened that I ran across an old Army friend who had been a pilot in the war and who was now flying the mails in one of the dilapidated wrecks left over in Germany and which only a crazy optimist could maintain was airworthy. This man had hatched the idea of giving exhibitions out on the Tempelhof Field, on Sunday afternoons, of jumps from a home-made parachute, and he made me an enticing proposal of partnership. Which is to say that, in consideration of half of the receipts, I was to hop out of the old crate he was manipulating and to entertain the public by my eventual crash to the ground. During the first try-out which we made with a dummy figure the parachute opened twice and twice did not. My friend laid the blame on the figure. I had already come so low that I was on the point of accepting the proposal, when a little incident occurred to save my life. Another war comrade, dressed in suspiciously fine raiment, met us one evening on the Nollendorfplatz, and it turned out that he had become the head of an illegal gaming-club and was engaged in a lot of shady *affaires* as well. The names of baronesses, countesses, princesses, oozed out either side of his mouth. This called for retaliation, so we haled him to a little bar, where I owed money and therefore was glad to make an appearance with a cash customer, and we began to swill drinks at his expense. As two ladies from the theatre whom I knew casually had joined us, our host became magnanimous and at the same time spiteful (he was determined to put us out of the running), so he ordered a strawberry punch into which he had them pour, in addition to the wine and champagne, some curaao, cognac, and rum. He was, to be sure, the first to go under the table, but the rest of us were none too steady on our pins when suddenly the flier received the telephone



message that his colleague, who was on duty that night, had crashed and that he must instantly fly the mail to Hanover in his stead. He was unable to reach his mechanic, and, although I knew nothing at all about the technical side, he insisted on the spot that I should accompany him. No matter how I longed for bed and basin, friendship demanded that I should allow myself to be carted out to Spandau in a rattle-trap official car and take my place at the companion controls of an old open-type war plane.

“Take off your safety helmet to sober up!” bellowed the man in charge of the air-mail service as we got in, but I could only see the movement of his lips. The noise from those old engines was frightful—my friend had long since become hard of hearing—and I now felt quite deaf. To state the matter briefly, I have rarely ever been so sick, and in Hanover a single glass of whisky made me turn deathly pale. On the return flight we ran into thunderstorm squalls which played with our old crate as the ocean surf does with an orange skin; the plane staggered round in the air as though it were full of our punch instead of petrol; then the engine stalled and we made a forced landing in a potato patch, stood on our heads and then, thoroughly shaken up, we assembled our bones. My friend attempted, with the aid of horrible oaths, to repair the machine. This almost led to an open breach between us, because I did not know the difference between a great female screw and a small balance lever; but fortunately he himself had to abandon it shortly, and the German Air Mail Line was deprived of a plane and a pilot, for he stepped right out of that potato patch into the insurance business, and our Sunday-afternoon scheme went up in smoke.



## § 5

But that other more likely gentleman who put us on to the punch took me in hand just when the state of my finances and my soul had sunk far below zero. I really was incapable in those days of seeing straight, and I clutched frantically at any possibility of remaining in Berlin, for to leave it would have meant absolute disaster. So I eagerly accepted his offer to earn some money in connexion with night life in Berlin despite the fact that this was, from every point of view, a rather doubtful thing to do. He himself was not only the manager of gaming-clubs but also of night clubs, which in those days of strict police enforcement of closing-hour regulations were operated without licences in private apartments.

At first I was used as a tout in the Friedrichstadt quarter, which meant that I had to roam round the streets somewhere between the Kranzlerecke and Potsdamerplatz about the time that public houses closed and to accost any gentlemen who looked promising from the point of view of their desires and their cash possibilities and to accompany them to the secret places of pleasure. In doing this there were two things to be avoided—the competition of other touts who would stop at nothing to snatch a prize from under your nose, and the attention of the police. One did not need to possess extraordinary psychological insight in order to pick out a likely customer; the best were the gentlemen from outside Berlin, merchants or farmers, or even occasional Reichstag deputies, who were in Berlin for a short stay and wanted to have a little metropolitan amusement. The entertainment offered them by the night clubs was modest and was not at all in proportion to the price or the risk of being arrested in a police raid. The establishment was usually housed in a ground-floor apartment in a courtyard building and was moved every week. Entrance



was effected by a system of agreed-upon knocks on a door or window, and the guest was introduced through darkened passageways, stumbling over unexpected steps. This induced an adventurous state of mind; the guest felt himself to be the hero of a detective novel, and this was an excellent stimulant to the consumption of champagne. A muffled gramophone wheezed the *Destiny* waltz or the *Morphium Boston* through its nose, and a couple of skinny girls, whose ambition it was to sleep their way up from their parental janitor's quarters to the fashionable apartment of some millionaire, executed dispirited and unimaginative 'nude dances,' something in the order of a burlesque or strip-tease number.

Except for little slips in making out the bills—a failing copied from more elaborate establishments—nothing criminal happened, and there was no need at all for me to feel like a highwayman when I whispered to stout gentlemen in heavy ulsters, behind the Tauben Casino or the Rheingold Restaurant, "Like to see a nice little night club? Intimate atmosphere, moderate prices . . . ?" After that I had to overcome their reluctant, scornful indecision and then the embarrassment of pocketing a tip.

But this was not what I dreamed of as my career. It was rather a condition of raging despair which welled up from far greater and more dangerous depths than the lack of money. One evening, shortly after I had been engaged, my boss transferred me to the west side, to the Wittenbergplatz—either with the idea of promoting me under his influence to a higher income or because I had not evinced much talent as a tout. He took me himself in a taxi to the Tauentzienstrasse and filled my pockets with a few cigars and some packets of cigarettes. But especially he supplied me with little squares of folded papers, such as you get from the chemists' shops, and each of which contained a fixed amount of white powder.



He gave a quick, short set of instructions as to how I was to handle them. All I had to do was pace up and down like a street-walker and on the same corner, meantime saying softly to myself, "Ssssscigars, ssssscigarettes," with a sharp, hissing s sound. That was the signal for the buyers, who in turn would make themselves known by audible sniffing through the nose and to whom I was supposed, in return for a fairly large note, to hand some cigars and one of the little paper folds. To my question about the contents he said, "Snow," and then added reassuringly that actually it was only cooking salt mixed with powdered aspirin and therefore hardly incriminating, but I was to be damned sure to watch out for the police and in case of necessity to say I had found the stuff in a taxi. If I was taken to the lock-up he would reimburse me accordingly if I did not mention his name. With that he jumped back into the car and drove off quickly.

I found the whole thing highly sinister. I knew exactly what was meant by 'snow' or even 'coke'—that it was cocaine, which at the time was Berlin's favourite dope. Whether he was really executing a double deception and working off cooking salt on cocaine-starved buyers or whether he just said that to reassure me, I did not know. Touting for a night club was comparatively harmless—what did I care if a somewhat tipsy country uncle spent too much money and woke up next day with a headache? But now I asked myself if I were not committing something really irresponsible, if I were not turning a blind eye to a line which no one may overstep. My God, I was hungry; I had not eaten any real food for days, but that was not the point—I needed money, I *had* to have money; perhaps then I could save the only thing that seemed worth more than life itself to me. It was probably all senseless and all was lost either way, but even if all meaning and the best in life were gone, one would still clutch at



senselessness and madness and the last desperate glimmer of hope and not give up, as long as one was in love. However that might be, I could not get out of the situation now. I was bound to the man who had brought me there, and after all he had pulled me up out of the thickest mud. No, there was no way back, and I should have thought of that earlier in the game.

"Ssssscigars, ssssscigarettes," I hissed tentatively to myself as I sneaked past the show windows of Kadewe, the big Berlin department store, all dead and unlighted at night. Suddenly a slim, dark-haired woman stood in front of me; her face was heavily made up, and in the light of the street lamps it gave the impression of a mask. She was swinging her handbag in her hand, letting it slap against her knee-length skirt in what to me seemed like a hostile gesture. Her eyes surveyed me critically.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, with a slight Slavic accent.

"What's that to you?" I shot back in fluent Berlineese. She shrugged her shoulders.

"Better watch out, kid," said she. "The 'tecs round here are wise. You're green in the business?"

I turned my back squarely on her and walked in the opposite direction.

"I'll give it up," I thought to myself. "I'll give notice. If only I knew where to find my boss . . ."

Then I became aware that a broad-shouldered man in a light overcoat, who had been leaning against the iron grating of a closed shop, was watching me and had begun slowly to dog my steps. I got hot all over. If only I hadn't those damned things in my pockets! I walked faster, overtaking several passers-by. The man in the light overcoat did likewise.

Suddenly the girl was at my side again.



"Grab my arm," she said softly, "and act as though we had a date." Then she snapped at me, "Quick—do as I say!"

Without grasping the whole situation, I did as she told me, slipped my arm through hers, and began to talk and laugh boisterously.

We strolled over the Wittenbergplatz and past several streets, the gentleman in the light overcoat watching us with irritation until we disappeared out of his sight.

Then the girl pushed me into a doorway.

"Man," she said, "you are the biggest sap ever let loose. Did you really think I was going to squeal on you?"

"I don't even know what you are talking about," I said, still distrustful.

"The 'tec outside there knows," she said with a grin. "He's got nothing on me, because I'm registered. But he's had his eye on you, and he would have pulled you in just like that."

"Why should he?" I asked obdurately, although I was already convinced at heart that the girl truly wanted to help me.

"Quit playing dumb," she said and lit a cigarette. "You see, I know Emil and his racket. . . . I guess you've run out of gas?" As she spoke she tapped me where a man usually carries his wallet. "Ho hum," she sighed. "Life's pretty thick. Were you an officer? They're all on their uppers. Show me the stuff," she ordered with abrupt practicability.

Since it was perfectly clear that she knew all about them anyhow, and that I was already in her power if she chose to report me, I pulled my paper packets out of my pocket. I was glad to be rid of them.

She began to count them, and her face took on an avid expression.

"How much does the big guy want for a pinch?"

I named the price he had told me.

"You wait here," she said quickly. "I ain't giving you



the slip. I got a customer over there in the Fémina, and he'll take all the 'snow' C.O.D."

I stood in the dark doorway and smoked.

In fifteen minutes she was back. She appeared to be in fine fettle and reeked of brandy.

"I sure fleeced him," was her remark. "He was already stewed and didn't even count it."

She pressed some money into my hand, more than I was supposed to bring back.

"Where you making for?" she asked.

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Perhaps to drink one more brandy," I answered thoughtlessly. I actually did not know where to go. My suitcase—it was that same one I carried when I came to town—was in storage. I had been put out of my last room for being behind with the rent. Whenever I had any money, as now, I went to some cheap hotel.

"You can come up with me," she said. "I live in this joint; there's steam. I'm not going out any more to-night."

She saw that I hesitated.

"Don't worry," she laughed. "You needn't pay. But I can't stand myself when I'm alone."

"I know how that is," I said.

Her room was no better and no worse than all the rest in this part of town. Disconsolate furnishings from the parlour, a bed with a lace coverlet, ghastly chromos. But it was warm, and she had a bottle of vodka.

"My name is Lyuba," she said, as she threw off her jacket. "My people came from Warsaw, but I am not going to tell you that they were Polish aristocrats. Make yourself at home."

She went on undressing and put on a gay-coloured kimono.

"Well, you needn't rush me off my feet like that," she said, when I sat down on a chair without coming any closer to her.



"Don't you like me?" she added.

With a few touches she had wiped the make-up off her face, and you could see that she was really pretty and surprisingly young.

"But I do," I said, as she poured me out some vodka. "As you look now, anyone would like you."

"You're queer," she said, and pulled something out of her bag. I saw that it was one of the little paper packets which she had evidently kept for herself.

"Don't you sniff?" she asked.

I shook my head.

She took a pinch; her eyes darkened.

"It feels good," she said, "and you forget everything." She held the paper out to me.

"Try it once!"

"There is nothing I want to forget," I said.

"Yes," she said thoughtfully, and settled down beside me; "I know now what is the matter with you. I can imagine."

"Listen here," I said, for I was suddenly embarrassed that she should think something quite wrong about me; perhaps my vanity was touched. "You have no idea what's the matter with me. But I'll tell you because you were so nice to me. I am very fond of a woman, and at present I am not interested in any other, even if she pleases me. That's all. Anyone ever tell you that before?"

She nodded.

"I thought so," she said. "How long were you with her?"

"Nearly two years," said I.

"Now it's all over," stated Lyuba with conviction, and took some vodka.

"What makes you say that?" I asked.

She laughed.

"You can't tell me anything about men," said she. "If



things were going right you'd act quite different with me. When you're happy you feel like champs, nothing matters; then you say, 'It's not cheating, it's only high spirits.' But when things are wrong you find out she is the only one. You love no one but yourselves anyhow."

"You must have read a lot of love stories," said I, for I did not want to admit that she was right.

"Why don't you want to talk about it?" she said. "You'd feel easier, and I—well, talking to me is like talking into the air."

"She is sick," I said, "and I have no money."

"That's not all," said Lyuba severely. "You are too young for her. A woman understands that better than a man. She knows it. You still have to cut through the waves like a speed boat; you can't take on a load or you're sunk and she too." Suddenly she stood up and grabbed me by the shoulders as though she wanted to shake me until I woke.

"Clear out," she said. "You'll end in the gutter here. Begin all over again; you can do it ten times in your life. And if something gets damaged, cut it off, quit worrying it. Be a man."

"I'll try," said I.

We drank some more vodka; then she fell asleep sitting upright. I lifted her on to the bed and covered her up.

The next day, before I left town, I sent her some flowers. I thought it would amuse her. And later on when I came back to Berlin I tried to look her up, but she had disappeared.

It was Good Friday, the day I left Berlin. At the railway-station the first violets were being hawked. I went back to my parents, to whom I had vowed I should return only as a made man. I was in the state of a defeated army. At home I could crawl in for a while and warm myself a little. Then I could go on.



## CHAPTER SIX

### *A Dream of Great Magic*

OUR family dining-table was oblong. Our parents sat opposite each other on the long sides and my brother and I at the upper and lower ends. When we were all at home together (which seldom was the case after the war), and our rectangle was fully occupied and closed, it held for us—whether consciously or unconsciously—the deeper significance of family solidarity, of belonging together, of a natural and consecrated order. These common repasts, at which my father performed the preliminary ritual of sharpening the carving-knife with one eye closed and one corner of his mouth quirked upward, were not just the habitual consumption of food; they never had the stuffy atmosphere of mutual contempt or smouldering hostility so common at the *bourgeois* dinner-tables. They were not even boring; indeed, they carried the stamp of an agreeable tradition and were gone through in a certain spirit of animated celebration, added to the fact that in our region, on the threshold of France, people ate with relish and well. The cooking was not elaborate or pretentious, but it prided itself on a sense of quality and distinction, consequently a cultivated sense, a kind of material standard of taste. There was also wine on the table, but we did not drink very much of it, just enough to heighten the flavour of and to agree with the food. In a countryside where grapevines grow in every lane and where there have been vineyards for more than a thousand years wine does not make people drowsy, nor does it easily intoxicate them. It is part of their nourishment, which comes from the soil, like fruit



or bread, and like this latter enjoys a loftier, more significant rank due to its use in the sacrifice of the Holy Mass. We, of course, waited to drink until my father had raised his glass and said "*Prosit*" or "*Santé*," just as out in the country, where no one would have thought of slicing any bread until the head of the house had made the sign of the cross over the loaf with the tip of his knife. The drinking of wine had not only the meaning of quenching thirst and gratifying the taste; it also had that of thanksgiving and blessing.

To sit at this table again after my Berlin *débâcle* was, even more than after the Great War, a source of healing and regeneration for me, a long-lost spring out of which there rose, as from an inexhaustible reservoir, the forces of self-confirmation and self-recovery. This could not be affected by the ironical remarks about my career as a dramatist with which my father peppered our meals and which sometimes were climaxed by the sentence, "You are nothing, you have nothing, you can do nothing, you'll be nothing—now you know it." If at the time it angered or stirred me to contradict him, still I knew exactly how he meant it and from what depths of concern and real sympathy his expressions derived. I should have felt that a tactful silence about my defeat or any special consideration for my dilapidated state would have been much more tactless and embarrassing. My parents had every right and every reason to be dissatisfied with the course I had pursued up to that point. Yet they were neither inflexible nor narrow-minded, and they had much more sympathy for and understanding of what was really going on inside me and what I was after than they, for reasons of responsibility, would have dared to express or show.

Actually they were not in favour of anything I had undertaken since the war. They had wished that, in view of their



reduced circumstances, I had attempted a steadier form of breadwinning. The field of the arts, into which I had been bold enough to step, appeared to them extremely wavering and uncertain. They were against my premature marriage, and then after it had actually taken place they were most certainly against my early divorce, which contradicted all their principles of life. But they did their best never to inflict their opinions or decisions on me. So it was a natural part of fairness with me not to make them pay for my blunders, crashes, or aberrations, not even in the purely material sense. If I insisted on going my own way and refusing to be influenced, then I had to do it at my own cost, my very own risk, from every point of view. How far that risk carried me and to what serious danger it had led was something my parents must never guess. As during the Great War, I supplied them with brief and optimistic reports even when I was up to my neck in trouble, and the fact that my parents' house, with its wholesome, clean, sincere attitude towards life, still remained, that it went on existing in my consciousness, and that my connexion with it never broke even in times of severest disagreement meant more to me than any material sacrifices ever could.

Training, guiding, can be highly questionable for all its good intentions. Living example is everything. My mother, tiny in stature, clever, quick, flexible, was a bubbling source of lively temperament, instinctive perception, humour and enjoyment of life. Any criticism which her over-emotional ways sometimes provoked in us turned into self-criticism in so far as we felt similar tendencies in ourselves. My father, more limited in his external ways and more reticent in the expression of his feelings, was at bottom much more of an imaginative and philosophic type than the realistic and practical man he liked to pretend he was. In him I felt, unex-



pressed, a deep emotional bond with everything that filled and moved me, and I interpreted his severe sense of duty as a kind of self-protection. As a very young man he had taken over a little factory amid the vineyards. The machinery was still operated by a mill-wheel, and in the shortest possible time by a brilliant upswing he brought it to the top of the industry of those days. Then, when he was barely thirty, he went almost blind as the result of a complicated major operation for cataract. From that time forward he was dependent on others; he could never go out alone, read, or move about freely. Professionally, too, he had to give up his independence. Despite every possible kind of operation and treatment, his sight continued to decrease until it was entirely gone in one eye and reduced to a faint glimmer in the other. But I never heard him complain. Nor did he ever in front of us make any show of despair or impatience. He never lost his quiet, cheerful composure, by means of which he seemed to imply that everything else in the world was of more consequence than the personal troubles inflicted on him. And now when certain buffets of fate get, shall we say, on my nerves, then I remember that my father for nearly fifty years has not seen the stars.

I had grown up in the country, and was lucky enough to be a second child, a younger son, on whom the exuberance of parental watchfulness and care was no longer so lavished as on the first-born. That promoted my sense of self-reliance. We received, according to Catholic family tradition, a religious upbringing, but were never subjected to compulsions of spirit or conscience. What I now had to fight through was not anything my parents understood very well, nor did it lend itself to being shared. The distance between them and me was not so much a matter of thinking and feeling as it was one of age and generations. They never could, nor should they, have



given up their conception of their world and their times. We neither could—nor would—go back into the shattered security of the pre-war epoch. That was lost. . . .

And in return for it we had been given something called freedom. A great and dangerous gift. It is easy enough to know from what you want to free yourself. But for what? For what purpose, what deed, to what end? The problem of all revolutions is not to achieve freedom; it is rather to know what is to be done with freedom. I had been familiar with the libertinism of Berlin, that 'freedom' of the semi-intellectuals which was based on undigested slogans and behind which there was nothing but hopeless dissolution. Schiller as a young man had already pointed out the tragic catastrophe to which this misunderstood freedom must lead. "Libertines, then bandits," were the comrades of the robber Moor in his youthful drama. The word "then" stood menacingly before my eyes. In the latter part of my time in Berlin I had felt the pull of the abyss violently enough. I did not want to be drawn down there. I wanted to go forward, with the vanguard of my time. I wanted to accomplish something, to make something of myself which would be significant for the world in which we were living. I felt that talent, imagination, faith, are not enough; that workmanship is necessary and practical discipline, skill, mastery over materials. I decided to learn my craft from the bottom up and at the source.

I went to the theatre. Connexions had already been established, preliminary ground had been broken in Berlin, and a head of a theatre was found who was foolish enough to take me on. With freshly mended linen and a contract as actor, assistant *régisseeur*, and play-reader in the Kiel Municipal Theatre (with beginner's pay) I left my parental home. It was then shortly after Easter; productions were to be staged



in the autumn. Meantime I should be able to get along somehow. Summer was ahead.

The intervening time was not bad. A friend and I went on foot through part of Germany. We spent the nights in haylofts, and sometimes we worked in the fields and in the stables in return for bread and soup. In every pocket I had cheap editions of plays in order to prepare myself for my profession. I learned parts, I arranged scenes, made up prompt books. My goal was Brake-on-the-Weser, a little North Sea port. I had a letter to the captain of a Norwegian ore boat which was to leave for Narvik early in June. Everything dovetailed. Although I had neither money nor a passport with a *visa*, the captain took me along as an extra hand. I was given light work to do on board, and despite heavy winds I ate so much of the unaccustomed delicacies of Scandinavian ships' fare (in Germany we were still on a post-war diet) that I caused a sensation among the crew. Soon I needed to do nothing else but eat for exhibition, and there were always a few curious ones who would lay bets as to whether or not I could get away with one more portion. So we arrived in the realm of the midnight sun, and up there at that time of the year there really was no trace of darkness. You could not tell day from night, and people were correspondingly on fire. I found them enchanting and their hospitality biblical. Here, too, I made my way principally as an exhibition eater, and my accomplishment was much admired and rewarded.

For a while I worked in the electrical plant of a pyrites mine, situated on the mountain-encircled fiord of Ballangen, where the British in the spring of 1940 sank several German destroyers. At a giddy dance festival held aboard a Swedish steamer I lost my heart (not permanently). She had green



eyes, but was married to a wealthy shipowner, who almost murdered me. But afterwards we made friends, and he invited me to several hunting and sailing parties. It was a divine summer. Another job I had was as a porter with an expedition into the Lapland Alps to survey certain newly discovered silver deposits, and then in September, when the first stars began to sparkle over the Northlands, I went back to Germany with a few Norwegian crowns in my pocket.

## § 2

The crowns provided me with a triumphal entry into Kiel, the city of my future theatrical activity, for in Germany inflation was spreading like wildfire and an extremely tiny amount of foreign currency sufficed to turn its possessor into a financial magnate. At first I lived in the best hotel in Kiel, where the head waiter, Detlev, had once served the Kaiser and ever since had lisped out of deference. During the first week I gave him such princely tips that for the rest of the season I had unlimited credit with him. The fresh Nordic summer, the adventure of the landscape and the sea, had thoroughly cleared my brain and chased out the bats of memory. I was, above all, carried away by and fired with a passion for the theatre. I plunged into it with the same headlong fury with which I had gone into the war and then into literature, and at the same time I had the feeling that I was a magician's apprentice engaged in covertly ferreting out the worthy sorcerer's magic circles and secret signs, with which to conjure up spirits never before seen.

As in the Heidelberg days, a group of congenial minds immediately came together, a couple of young actors of both sexes, a *régisseeur*, a painter, an orchestra leader, all of whom were as determined as I to start with Kiel to reform the



theatres of the world and, through the theatres, the world. We were impelled by the same urge as in the early post-war period: to join in the building of a new era on the ruins of the old. Here, in the theatre, we had a practical tool in our hands. We were dedicated to the creation of a new style, a new statement, a new inwardness to be expressed in its own terms, which to us seemed natural because it corresponded more closely to our own concept of human nature and destiny, the product rather of emotion than intellect. We took this in deadly earnest, and no matter how wildly we carried on or how far we overshot the mark or how eccentrically we behaved, we proclaimed, with every startling lighting effect, every grotesque costume, and every fulminating word, a passionate conviction of a new world, the dawn of a new day.

We had a mad, magnificent time in Kiel. The head of the Municipal Theatre, a progressive and well-meaning professional who liked to feel young with the youngsters and was touchingly confident of my future, surrendered completely to our uncontrolled and self-intoxicated vanguard; I gained more and more influence over him, and took advantage of this to alter the repertory and productions to suit our tastes. We scraped together talent wherever we could find it. We assigned big parts to gifted beginners who had never seen a stage before, like that shipyard worker Ernst Busch and the student Minetti, who later became famous in Berlin. Naturally we butted against every possible obstacle, especially inside the theatre, where the older actors due for retirement found our artistic passions painfully disturbing to their peace. But the more they opposed us the more radical became our exploits. I put through a cycle of contemporary dramas in which, alongside of Strindberg, Wedekind, Georg Kaiser, the most modern authors like Barlach and Brecht, were presented—an abomination to the Kiel subscribers—and we gave of Shakes-



peare and the classics productions that no professor of literature could have recognized. When they refused to give us money for a new performance we made all the properties ourselves; the women sewed the costumes, and we repainted old sets by night.

All this could not move at such a rate for long. Kiel, the citadel of the former Navy, the seat of stodgy reaction, felt that its artistic life was being fired in every quarter. The *première* of a Mozart opera in modern dress and played with rhythmic motions instead of the usual operatic gestures led to heart attacks and apoplexy among the audience. They wrote us menacing letters, and each one of our productions came to constitute a danger to public safety. Soon we realized that we were fighting a losing battle, and thus need exercise no further restraint; we consciously pushed things to a catastrophic climax. I had made a new version of an old Roman comedy, *The Eunuch*, by Terence, and myself directed its production. I had adapted the play, in which the heroine is the great courtesan Thaïs and the ridiculous hero a defeated but vainglorious general, into the language of the present, the unvarnished German of the post-war period. We had the great general and his sycophants appear in make-up reminiscent of some of our well-known contemporaries, and we did not curb ourselves in the least when it came to giving the saturnalian eroticism of the piece its full value. All words which the classic editions of the play indicate by asterisks we pronounced with pedantic distinctness. Besides, we packed into the dialogue and action all political and other frank remarks which we itched to ram down the throats of the Kiel people.

Our success was smashing. Our rash theatre manager arranged to give the first performance before an audience of invited guests, to whom in an address he pointed out the epoch-marking significance of the evening. He believed in it him-



self, although he knew that the production was not a work of art, but at most a sketch, an apprentices' preparatory exercise. In the orchestra, beside their ladies, sat the prominent dignitaries of Kiel society, official life, and the university. The place was alive with beards *à la* Admiral Tirpitz. After the prologue, in which, as in the Roman theatre, the phallic symbol was used to glorify creative Eros, no one in front dared to draw a breath, for not a single person wished to let slip an exclamation of horror, and no one left the theatre until the final curtain had buried the hope that things could get any worse. But that very night the Municipal Council was summoned, and on the next day all Kiel was in a wild uproar, the theatre was closed by the police, the manager and all of his accomplices were summarily dismissed. So that I, at the end of my first employment, remained in possession at least of a document attesting the fact that I was released *sine die* "because of complete artistic incapacity."

But the rumour of our experiments and exploits spread through the German theatre world, and our expulsion aroused more sympathy than disgust in its progressive circles. The next leap did not take me back to Berlin, although it was a big step in advance, but to Munich, where I was engaged to come to the Schauspielhaus the following autumn.

I had left Kiel under cover of night because I could not risk being seen in the streets there, and with me went the daughter of an admiral in the former Imperial Navy. I might have gone with her into another over-hasty marriage if my shrewd father had not neglected to send me certain necessary documents. Meantime I had recovered my senses, and the admiral's daughter made me a parting present of several pairs of her father's buckskin gloves, which I used for years. We wore the same size. Otherwise there was no bond between us.



## § 3

German inflation had by this time reached its zenith, and one lived in an atmosphere of billions, trillions, and noughts. I was usually in this last category, especially between jobs, when I was at a loose end, writing poems and sketching out plays. In Bavaria I acquired the nickname of Spaghetti Baron because I knew how to subsist for weeks on that cheap article of diet. In a small railway-station, while I gnawed on a stale crust of bread, I wrote a poem, a lyric hymn to "Food." It was published by a literary magazine in Berlin to which I submitted it, and it caused quite a stir. It was often recited on festive occasions, at tables groaning with food, and no one dreamed that it was the delirious ravings of a growling stomach.

The success of this poem and some others, dealing directly with the elementals of nature and life, also accepted and printed by magazines, gave me the hope that I might be on the way to discovering the magic formula for my own way of expression, and encouraged me to continue making new attempts at playwriting. That summer a variety of adventures and perils led me as far as Italy and aboard a Greek freighter, filled with all the stench of the East, to Marseilles. There I stood for a long time in front of the Hôpital de la Conception, where the poet Rimbaud, gazing across to Africa, had died in a delirium of fever. But his *Bateau Ivre*, his *Illuminations*, still shot their flames through the lyrical state of emotion of our day and world.

My time in the Munich theatre was clouded over by inflation and political brawls. In November I lived through the notorious Bierhallen Putsch of the future Führer of the Reich, Adolf Hitler. I lived through it at fairly close range, by which I mean I was among people who were 'in it' and sympathized with it. The landlady in my boarding-house, a certain Frau



Lott-Loecherer—she was completely unmusical and sang with a shrill, cracked voice—was convinced that the only reason why her career in musical comedy had been frustrated was because she would not make herself attractive to a Jewish *régisseur*. Her ‘friend,’ whom she fattened on white sausages before bedtime, was a jobless bank employee who had been dismissed because of some irregularity. He cultivated his vindictiveness by learning the mysteries of Gottfried Feder’s political economy by heart and by proclaiming with balled fists the “breaking of the bondage to usurers”—by which he meant above all his former departmental chief.

This young man took part in the Putsch, and when the police were searching for him he confidently hid himself in my room. I did not report him. He had been in the war, and anyhow I looked on the whole matter as absurd nonsense. I merely expressed my opinion to him at the same time as I was, so to speak, saving him, and he had the appearance of being very broken up. But how he may have laughed inwardly over my stupidity! Yet was it stupidity? At least it was gross negligence, false superiority, and when I think what that man later on may have done, been guilty of, what iniquities he may have committed against the lives of an untold number of people who were my friends and against the existence and future of an entire nation, even the whole world, it almost seems to me that what I did then was a crime. Yes, we roared with laughter over the idea that that conglomeration of crude brutality and wild phraseology which at most might work on some beer-sodden Munich fatheads could ever affect or influence Germany, the most enlightened country in the world. We simply could not even picture it, and that lack of imagination was a culpable and reprehensible shortcoming, the responsibility for which was shared by all of us who were living there at that time.



If only we had been aware of one small realistic detail which we now know—namely, how much money German heavy industry was pumping into this movement—we should not have spent so much time poking fun at Hitler's bad German and the intellectual level of his cronies. But even if we did not foresee our own catastrophe until it was too late, there is still the faint hope that we may, since it is not too late for them, serve as a warning example to others.

In the middle of the season I went back to Berlin to work as play-reader for the Reinhardt theatres. This time I was less drunk with victory when I entered the city, but I had a great sense of inner conviction that now I should find the path I had missed before. Meantime the whole face of Berlin had changed. The stabilization of the mark had driven it to a climax of unheard-of intensity. This was also expressed in purely external terms, in the way of life and the aspect of the city. Berlin had expanded, become elegant and refined. Not only had the dirt and disrepair of the last years of the war disappeared, but also the stucco-work, the cheap ornamentation, and the *bourgeois* pomposity of the Imperial era. You saw the prettiest and best-dressed women, and among the men neither the crude, high-powered business type nor the *Junker* military predominated any longer, but a new aristocracy of the mind, accomplishment, and craftsmanship which reached an unusually high level, especially in the field of art. In the middle of the twenties Berlin had become the real cultural centre of the German Republic; yes, it was even the intellectual capital of Europe, and was well on the way to achieving the position which the great German poet Hölderlin recommended to his people, "Unarmed among the nations, giving counsel to kings and priests."

The Reinhardt theatres were a part of this general rise. To their number of old establishments in the Schumannstrasse,



now hoary with traditions, was added another new, very dignified and massive structure in the very heart of all these new riches on the Kurfürstendamm, and even Reinhardt himself dropped in occasionally to the Reinhardt theatres, the administration of which he had entrusted to others while he travelled abroad as a guest star among *régisseurs*. On these visits he would shower them with brilliant and enchanting productions. There they could afford, in an atmosphere of general and highly cultivated prodigality, to engage two play-readers at once who were themselves writing plays and for that reason lacked all true capability for sorting letters or any other office work, but who had the reputation of being extremely radical in a literary way. These two were Bert Brecht and I. In a theatrical enterprise like this a play-reader was either a subordinate office clerk charged with the care of scripts and books or else more or less of an intellectual ornament. For neither of these occupations were we at all fitted. Brecht only rarely put in an appearance, dressed in a loose leather jacket which made him look a cross between a lorry-driver and a Jesuit schoolboy. He demanded what might be termed a complete seizure of power, exclusive control of the repertory according to his theories, the change of name of all the group of stages to the "Epic Smoking Theatres," because he was a proponent of the thesis that people would go to see even the most complicated plays if they were allowed to smoke during the performance, and when this was refused he would disappear again for a long time. In the building of the Deutsches Theater they assigned an office to me, to which every morning Zimmerman, the celebrated white-bearded porter, brought six gleaming black-coal bricks for heating and laid them down beside the old-fashioned tile stove. Somewhat later I came into the office with an empty brief case and the morning paper under my



arm, and when I had read it it served to wrap up the coal bricks, which were then stuffed in my brief case. After which I went away again apparently laden with manuscripts. I carried the Reinhardt coal bricks to my near-by furnished room, and by their warmth I worked on my new play. Except as a coaling-station I rarely used my office. (The sofa was downright uncomfortable!) But I was by contrast a tireless frequenter of the Reinhardt rehearsals, which I watched from some back row or box where I was not likely to be hunted up and have some superfluous work foisted on me. Enchanted, enthralled, spellbound, I watched Reinhardt work his magic; I observed every minute phase of the 'embodiment' of figments born of fantasy into plastic form and the super-realistic dimension of the stage, the penetration of the actor's person into another figure and *vice versa*, and I projected all this experience into my own dramatic idea world. At that time Reinhardt was putting on the first production of George Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan*, Pirandello's *Six Characters*, and various other plays, and all the great actors of Berlin were working on these stages.

Occasionally I did some practical work; I drilled the supernumeraries, conducted individual rehearsals, even appeared in Eric Engel's production of *Danton* with a Jacobin cap on my head and bawling "La Carmagnole." But above all there were innumerable, quick, violent theatrical friendships formed inside the theatre in the cloakrooms or outside on the sedate old Berlin pavement in front of the drive. We sat together in little neighbouring beerhouses, at Balsar's, Saalbach's, "Dete," debating, criticizing, arguing, making love, and chalking up the drinks. In places like that we planned the sensational productions of the Junge Bühne; we discussed and prepared them for an ideal experimental theatre which was created and managed without money, without credit, and



without organization by a small, bespectacled fanatic named Moriz Seeler. He had set himself the goal of bringing out plays by fresh talent which the official, commercial theatres could not, as yet, make up their minds to accept.

Nearly all the gifted writers of those days were first played here. The performances, the costs of which were defrayed by Berlin art lovers or sometimes even by successful artists, took place on Sunday mornings, and the greatest actors of Berlin made it a point of honour to collaborate without salary and in addition to their other work. They did this in part out of enthusiasm for the undertaking and in part because these advance-guard performances drew the particularly bright limelight of publicity to them.

Here I experienced my second Berlin opening one bright Sunday morning in February. All the rehearsals had taken place at night because the majority of the actors were not free in the daytime. On the morning of the *première* we were all completely overwrought and worn out, for none of us had gone to bed for several nights. As I watched the public streaming in my head began to swim, not only from excitement but also from the quantities of black coffee with which we kept ourselves awake. These single *matinée* performances were always packed by an *élite* public of intellectuals and by their sensation-mongering contemporaries. There you could see the towering alps of Berlin's intelligentsia—Albert Einstein, Stresemann, sometimes even Schacht, the President of the Reichsbank, all kinds of artists, scholars, writers.

The performance nearly turned into a catastrophe because the leading man had got drunk out of excitement, exhaustion, or nervousness, and he never knew which scene he had played and which he had not, so that we were obliged to hold on to him in the wings to prevent his repeating himself and to keep him from barging boisterously into the scenes of others.



In spite of this the result was all that it could or should have been: a battle royal, a clash of opinions, a fierce pro-and-con debate, thumbs up, thumbs down, clapping and whistling (we whistled when we were against a thing). It was an unfermented, uneven play; it probably contained some talent but without proportion or measure. In any case it contained good parts and strong acting scenes, and that *matinée* laid the corner-stone of the career of a *régisseur* and provided a triumph for a character actor. For me it was as yet no triumph, although it gave proof of unbroken energy, a driving-power, a forward surge. An attempt and an encouragement.

On the other side of the ledger progressive experiments of this sort carried in them the danger of one's persisting in a stubborn, nothing-but-radical attitude of remaining an outsider and on a plane where one could not help but play with dynamite. This danger was especially great for our generation which had been subjected to so much pressure from the chaos of the events of our times that many had succumbed to it. This was quite clear to me at that time. I had no desire to establish myself indefinitely as a 'promising young man.' The night before the performance I seriously wanted to withdraw the play because in the course of the rehearsals my eyes had been opened to all its fundamental faults and shortcomings. But after the natural excitement and powerful stimulus of the *première* I knew positively that it was no longer up to me to throw literary bombs but to create something whole, properly integrated, all of a piece.

I have rarely been in such amazing good humour as in the time that now ensued. I was once more unemployed (evidently the Reinhardt theatres had to reduce their coal bills). But that did not worry me in the least. There are days when you can tell in advance that you are going to be lucky. There are times when you can actually feel through your body that



the stars are favouring you. I must have been in some such current then. I believe that if I had gone to Monte Carlo that year I should have broken the bank. A somewhat demented lady who lived in my boarding-house read the cards for me and suddenly shrieked, "Money lies close to your house; a blonde lady is coming across your path; you will marry before the year is out and will become rich overnight through your own efforts!" We roared with laughter till we had to hold our sides when she also predicted impending progeny for me. For the time being there was no question of money in my 'house' and I was months behind in the rent to my landlady, in whose *salon* I had consulted the oracle of the cards, but she was a touching old spinster who in addition to her toothless dog loved only me and Hindenburg. He was elected President that summer, but even this could not diminish my exalted mood. Thank God we did not know then in what treasonable schemes the old gentleman would one day be involved, and that he was chosen to play the part of the involuntary grave-digger at the burial of the Constitution to which he had pledged allegiance.

#### § 4

A distant connexion of my family, who was very rich, invited me down to a castle he had rented on the Wannsee. It was an ugly pile, in imitation of a knightly stronghold, but it included a large octagonal tower room with a magnificent view out over the landscape, so I decided to write my new play there. Naturally I could not let my host know how straitened my financial situation was and that I had no choice but to accept his invitation. I was too familiar with the psychology of the rich to give him a chance to feel that he was acting as my benefactor. On the contrary, I granted him the pleasure



of my visit, and at the end of every week, after I had deliberated on the preferability of going to an Alpine resort or to the seaside, I allowed myself reluctantly to be moved to stay on for a brief time. If I had occasion to go to town I borrowed the price of a railway ticket from his valet Paul, whom I had taken into my confidence and who rightly believed that he would receive a proper rate of interest on his good deeds while still of this world. I worked feverishly, and my new play took on more and more form and life. It was different from anything I had ever done before. I had grasped something fundamental—that you must begin to build a house from the cellar up and not from the roof down, that a growth does not start with blossoms but with roots. In lyrics, in prose writing, I had followed that path instinctively—in drawing the portrait of a tree, describing the life of a moth, telling the story of a pool with all the creatures living and breathing in it—concentrating everything I had in me of perception and word magic. Now I was attempting to do the same thing in the human realm of drama; of their own accord the surroundings and living quality of my homeland came to me, the melody and character which you carry in your life like your own words and breath, and it all turned by itself into a comedy. And as in every real comedy, under the jesting, the satire, and the irony, there lay a deeper significance, the defence of the good, sound folk world of the Germans against obscurantism, bombast, callousness. This welled up from the desire to have true nature triumph over artificiality and false phrases.

Towards the end of the summer the play was finished, and then began the struggle to get it put on. Meantime—to be exact, it was in the interval between the second and third acts—I had suddenly married, and I knew for certain that this time it was a true, serious, and completely responsible marriage



although its material circumstances would have led anyone to believe I was insane. The proprietor of the castle, my rich relative, was deeply disillusioned. His intentions for me were excellent, and in the course of the summer he had invited all sorts of young ladies from the best social sets, heiresses to great fortunes, bearers of resounding names, to his tennis courts and boating parties, in the secret hope of being able to announce a lucrative engagement. This dream vanished when I announced to him that I had now met a woman with whom I could live, and that for the sake of simplicity and joint housekeeping we had immediately had the banns published. I could not introduce her, as she possessed exactly one dress and out of legitimate pride she did not care to appear in it in elaborate houses or restaurants. She came from impoverished Austria and had given up a promising career on the stage because her real aim was to study medicine and physical science. Although my dowry consisted of my debts and patched clothes—my shirts were impeccable above the belt, but their tails, which had been used for mending the upper part, consisted of old handkerchiefs sewed together—I declared to her with impregnable conviction that I was in the process of building up a firm existence, that I intended to finance her studies and my own work, that I was fed up with wandering round, and that in one year at the latest I wanted to own a house in the country, have a child, and a proper, productive life. Neither of us doubted for a single instant that this would all happen, and that is probably why it did.

That autumn my comedy, *The Jolly Vineyard*, was turned down by all of the Berlin theatres. Not one of their managers, and hardly a single one of the progressive *régisseurs*, believed in its possibilities of success. The background, the speech, the humour, the degree of uninhibited veracity and perhaps bold, or at least unusual, moral of the play frightened them



off. Here were country people, seen without any enhancing glamour, in the naked actuality of their lives, loves, and behaviour. This was something they did not dare offer to Berlin theatregoers. "Our public," wrote one theatre manager who was friendly to me, "insists on its musty old atmosphere, sprayed with new perfumes. But I don't get any fresh air on the stage."

Although I now had a contract to write a novel for the Ullstein publishing house and was receiving a small monthly allowance from them, my material situation was menacing and any hope of success was growing dimmer. Then my play fell into the hands of Old Elias. It was purest accident that I had never yet made the acquaintance of this patriarch of Berlin art life. But now it came about at exactly the right moment. To give a description of him is almost an impossibility. No one would believe it, for there is probably not another man like him in the world. At any rate, I never met anyone who combined in his person such an abundance of temperament, knowledge, mind, culture, with such consummate generosity, such ardent passion to discover, to support, to bring out young talents, such complete unselfishness, faith, and capacity for enthusiasm. Small, flat-footed, with a Charlie Chaplin gait, bushy eyebrows and eyes flashing with fire, he shot out at you like a rocket when you entered his office, and even his handshake made you believe in yourself whether you wished to or not.

"Do you need money?" was the greeting he called to me the first time I went to see him, and then he followed it with his own answer, "Of course you need money! All playwrights need money! But be calm!" he cried, although I had as yet not opened my mouth and was just standing there filled with amazement. "Be calm! Your play will make millions! Millions!" With that he threw his arms into the air like some



biblical prophet and then brought them down on my shoulders, which he, looking up at me in a fatherly way, proceeded to shake vigorously. "Don't get lazy after your success," he added gruffly. "Don't go buying yourself a large house and expensive car! You don't need it! You can become great if you will remain sensible and keep working. Buy lovely clothes for your young wife, but not too much jewellery, or else she'll get the diamond rage and fling all your money out of the window!"

"At present," I said modestly, "she hasn't even got a winter coat, and my play has been turned down everywhere."

"Nonsense!" interrupted the old man. "Whoever rejects that play is my enemy!" He had already anticipated success, money, a career for me, and was not to be put off by the little obstacles that intervened.

But if Julius Elias ever promised you anything you could absolutely rely on it, fantastic as that may sound. He had experience. In the nineties he was one of the co-founders of the Free Stage, on which Gerhart Hauptmann and his generation rose to fame. With Brandes and Schlenther he had put Ibsen's works into German and published them. The first exhibitions of the French Impressionists were arranged by him in the days when people still attacked them with canes and umbrellas. The first monograph on the great artist Max Liebermann came from his pen, and there was hardly a single man in the field of art, either of the young or youngest generations, to whom he had not been at one time or other a wet-nurse and foster-father.

A week after he had shouldered the responsibility for my play he told me that it had been accepted by Saltenburg, the controller of three large theatres in Berlin, and that it would be put on before Christmas. He had brought this about by means of blackmail. Saltenburg needed some box-office



attractions for his theatres and jobs for his actors, so he was most anxious to get the rights to some Paris successes, the sure-fire kind, and these were all in the hands of Julius Elias, who also translated some of them. So a kind of barter agreement was arrived at: Elias gave him options on three French smash hits which other Berlin producers were also after, with the condition that *The Jolly Vineyard* would be accepted and put on. The theatre chief, who did not believe in the play, naturally did his best to extricate himself from the toils of his agreement, but Elias held on and raised rows in his office until we reached the first rehearsal.

And then something happened which always fills theatre people with darkest misgivings; from the first to the last rehearsal every one laughed. The actors started their work as though they had breakfasted on champagne; they were always willing and good-natured; I could require the most difficult dialect expressions from them and have them repeated a thousand times without one of them losing his patience. There was not a single row. In short, everything happened which is looked upon in the theatre as fraught with ill omen. We even had a brilliant dress rehearsal to the applause of an audience of colleagues. Anyone who was in the least superstitious was bound to predict the most ghastly failure, and the head of the theatre himself was still permeated with the conviction that Old Elias had swindled him. At the last rehearsal I sat behind him and watched him cringe painfully at every outburst of laughter, every sign of applause. In the interval I heard him say to one of the stage technicians, "Don't store the sets from our last production. We'll need them again in three days."

It was three days before Christmas. My mother had come from far-away Mainz to attend the opening, but my father's memory was too keen for him to venture a second time. I



wore out the door mat at the Ullstein publishing establishment trying to get an increase in my advance royalties to buy her a present. It was only a question of a hundred marks, but I was turned down; in the treasurer's office they knew that the production of my play was imminent, but they wanted to read the reviews first.

As we drove to the theatre I said to my wife, "If all goes well you shall have a winter coat, and my mother will get a pair of overshoes trimmed with fur." That was as far as my imagination dared to soar. My wife had on a gorgeous evening dress she had borrowed from a friend, and I had on my old black suit, which was brushed till it shone. But I was wearing some new patent-leather shoes not yet paid for. Consequently they creaked like the ox-carts of the early pioneers.

As I peeped through the hole in the curtain before it went up I saw the same ghostly row of critics sitting in front, just as they did that other time, at my funeral in the Staatstheater. They were nearly all there—only a few since then had died off from senile decay. This time I did not have a seat in a box. I was too excited. I remained backstage throughout the entire performance, and amused bystanders told me afterwards that I shaped each word of the play with noiseless lips.

After the first few lines a sound began to come over from the audience that went to the marrow of my bones; it was like the growling of a hungry beast, and abruptly swelled to a shrill, penetrating whinny as though it came from a thousand devils. It seemed to me that I had never heard such sounds before. Immediately afterwards it cracked and clattered, like rain in a thunderstorm pelting down on a tin roof. The man who had produced the play was suddenly standing beside me and pinching my arm for joy.

"They are laughing," he whispered, "and interrupting with applause!"



I was cold all over. I felt as I did the first time under fire. What happened for the rest of the evening I no longer remember distinctly. It has remained in my hearing memory as one great hurricane roar. When I was taken to a slit from which I could watch the audience I saw a surging wave of heads, faces, starched shirt-fronts, shoulders, which kept leaning over and twisting with laughter, gaping mouths from which issued cries and yells. It was like the outbreak of an epidemic of contagious laughter and was afterwards described as such by the public and even by the critics.

Amid all those people who were laughing till the tears ran down their cheeks and ruined their shirt-fronts there were two who sat in deadly earnest and never changed their expression; they were my wife and my mother. It was no laughing matter for them. It was a tremendous, an overwhelming event. My mother and my wife had met for the first time only a few days before. Like other actions of mine which I did not care to discuss at length, I had announced my marriage to my parents as a *fait accompli*. Consequently the relation between the two was at first a little cool, critical, and tinged with a slight mutual fear. But now their common anguish, their common tumultuous emotion, had quickly thrown them together. They sat closely pressed against each other like two panicky hens, they clasped each other's hands. Their seats were in the critics' row, and beside my mother sat the fearsome Kerr who five years earlier had made such mincemeat of me.

When the curtain fell for the interval such a storm of applause broke that I was sure the chandeliers would crash to the ground, and I heard my name yelled as though the archangels were summoning me to the Last Judgment. I stepped out in front of the curtain, blinded by the footlights and walking as though I were in a trance. I kept going out again



and again, back and forth, and they say I was pale and deadly serious and that my patent-leather shoes creaked a special ovation of laughter for themselves. Even my mother, whom I saw for a second at the stage door, was benumbed and wan and could only whisper to herself with trembling lips, "Kerr smiled!" It sounded like, "The headsman is taken ill. The execution is postponed."

During the final act I stood once more in the wings and, without realizing what I was doing, I drank a whole bottle of Old Rhine wine which the actors had presented to me. Towards the end I even had something to do in the play myself; the scene was at dawn and a rooster was supposed to crow. As our stage manager was an urban product and did not know how to crow with a sufficiently genuine inflexion to suit me, I had undertaken to do it myself at the opening. In spite of my excitement I crowed on my cue, and those who heard me said I was not bad. When the final curtain fell it was like a scene in a bullring: ladies threw flowers and handkerchiefs on to the stage, the curtain puller acquired a stiff arm, and I was embraced and pressed to the heart of so many actors that my old black suit was all splotted with make-up. But now it could be pensioned off in peace. Old Elias had tears of joy in his eyes when he came up on to the stage to congratulate me, but he could not bring out a single syllable—during the performance he had yelled himself hoarse, and now he was speechless. Suddenly—I hardly know how it happened—we were in the midst of a huge party to which we had been carried off, and it was in the town house of that same rich relative in whose knightly castle I had written the play. He had come to the opening, but had prudently held back his invitation until the interval, and as the success of my play grew he added more and more people to his list. Now 'all Berlin' was crowding through his rooms, every one



wanted to have been there that night, and Paul, the butler who during the summer had so knowingly protected me, passed the champagne with a beaming face. They even passed me round wherever there was a request for me, and in my trance-like state I was barely aware of the names which were spoken to me. They were the incredible names of gods, the names of the higher powers who otherwise reign supreme above the clouds and do not exist in the shape of ordinary mortals. These were not men, they were 'houses,' enterprises, publishing establishments, editions. What young writer, even though published by the house of Ullstein, had ever seen a live Ullstein? And here were three of them all gathered together at once, Franz, Hermann, Louis; and it wasn't just that they were called that, they really were the Ullstein House. Every third dinner jacket holding a dish of cold salmon or a glass of champagne in his hand was attached to some head of a newspaper or back of a book; here was a Mosse and there an S. Fischer and beyond a Rowohlt. There would have been no cause for surprise if Hyperion of the Hyperion Press had appeared in person to ask for a glass of old Courvoisier or a large Havana cigar.

Old Elias whirled around in a Chaplinesque dance, as though he had a pair of rolls for legs, going from one group of publishers or producers to another; but as he still had no voice he used a graphic kind of sign language—he made gestures of counting out money and then threw all ten fingers up in the air. People nodded in agreement and understanding. Fantastic sums whirled through the air, and business men talked about me as though I were a sky-rocketing stock which might have been picked up at a bargain only yesterday. Late in the night I saw my wife, who by now was quite tipsy, sitting between two of the Ullstein brothers and telling them with beaming face that the novel I was supposed to write for



them, and which should have been delivered weeks before, was not even started and in all probability never would be. I had to hurry her off before she chattered away all my business secrets while in her blissful state. But all that was water over the dam now. On the following morning—it was the day before Christmas—I was told at the publishing house, in that same treasurer's office where three days earlier I had been rebuffed, that any amount of money would be at my disposal and that for the present a cash credit had been arranged for me at the bank; it was a sum ending with four noughts.

Nearly a hundred requests for the play had already been telegraphed in from provincial theatres; the advance sale of tickets leaped to amazing heights, and Saltenburg calculated on the play's running at least a year. It ran much longer. The fact that he yesterday had reckoned its probability of life at three days now completely escaped him, and to this day he is firmly convinced that he always believed in its success.

It was a sunny winter day; my wife and I walked arm in arm through the city and from one shop to another. When we wound up finally in a restaurant we were both refurnished from head to foot, from hat to shoes, from underwear to pocket watch, and we looked like people in a film who had won the grand prize in the lottery; we even seemed screamingly funny to each other.

## § 5

*The Jolly Vineyard*, which was taken up by Berlin with such unanimity and enthusiasm, had an extraordinary destiny. In the provincial towns of Germany it not only broke all records for the number of performances, but also it ran up a total of seventy-two theatre riots. A war broke out over the play such as I had never dreamed of unloosing; it was, as a



matter of fact, the first great cultural fight between the Nazis and those who thought otherwise. The Nazis, who had inscribed the slogan of "Blood and Soil" on their banners, foamed at the mouth with rage because these ideas unintentionally and unemphatically had been brought to actual life in a play. They were (as I think they should be) expressed in the spirit of the real, genuine folk, which does not fit into any party framework. But something even more interesting occurred; the Nazis felt themselves to be caricatured in a laughable, ridiculous personage in the play, in whom fun and satiric content were concentrated. This was something I had not intended, at least not consciously. In this figure—that of a depraved student, full of arrogance and conceit, who speculates with the dowry of a rich wine-grower, is discovered to be a swindler, and in the end sleeps off his spree on the manure pile where he belongs—I really wanted to portray a type that, to every sane German of those days, would appear to be highly superfluous, disgusting, and ridiculous. I wanted to get his exact likeness as you do in a picture, by presenting him with humour but not with one-sided satire; in the end I even allowed him a drop of pity and understanding. But I had no idea how near the bull's-eye I had struck—indeed, straight into the vanity of the Nazis, who saw in this unsympathetic figure their own secret qualities rudely unveiled and derided. Added to this was their notorious jealousy, so typical of their attitude of mind, a jealousy of all success which they were unable to incorporate into their own exasperated and frustrated ranks. So they raged individually, in groups, in organizations, against the play. There were scuffles, brawls. In a number of cities it had to be given under police guard, and in my home town of Mainz there was such a demonstration against the theatre that whole sections of the city had to be barred. Yet, with all that, the Nazis were



giving an enormous amount of involuntary advertisement to my work. The majority of the population in those days were not by any means on their side; the majority of them were for the play. All those who felt themselves injured by it—even some Jews were offended because two Jewish travelling wine salesmen appeared in it as comic characters—wanted to have seen the play at least once so that they could really get mad about it.

To me all the loud noise about this play, which I found was overrated or, rather, judged by immoderate standards, and the clamour about everything I published at that time was not exactly what I dreamed of. I wanted to dig deeper into, rather than work along the broad surface of, our noisy actuality. I believed passionately in a better future for the German people. I still believe in it to-day. To me the extreme radical position into which they were constantly being manœuvred was a path of inner disintegration and in calamitous opposition to their real way and inborn destiny. I did not believe in the extremes of either the Right or the Left, but in a sound, sturdy synthesis based on an elemental right to life for working people and on the initiative of free, creative personality. I gave and give no credence to abstract State ideology or to concrete lust for power, but put my faith in the building up of a new and fresh type of community of peoples, a World Economy as a World Union, which is to say a cultural phenomenon, a revolution stemming from above, out of the spirit, out of creative activity.

But in Germany the youth clamoured for organization, leadership, the fixing of aims. The irresolute, lagging centre forced them more and more into the radical, fanatic extremes where life was dangerous, exciting, and embattled. It was a part of the best and most talented youth that was the first to fall a prey to the demagogues, who exploited their craving



for development, for freedom of action. They did it for their own purposes, behind which there was nothing but unscrupulous desire for power. You could easily distinguish the extremists of either side by their physiognomies. They developed an almost physical type. Many, among the younger ones, had close and deep-set eyes, a well-shaped but rather narrow forehead and sharply indented temples, with a certain weakness or tendency to softness round the chin and cheeks which was covered up by a convulsive, forced expression of severity. With the radicals of the Left the facial expression took rather the form of a permanent ironic curl round the corners of the mouth which implied that they knew in advance everything that might happen in the world and even a factual counter-contradiction could not contradict them. The radicals of the Right, however, showed by their tight-closed lips, their forcibly projected chins and heavy scowls, that their will to destroy their enemies was inexorable, even if they had first to make those enemies by force. These fireproof dogmas and cast-iron theories seemed to have banished all laughter from their faces, chased away all gaiety, and simple joy of living was condemned to death as high treason. Nothing made these people so dangerous, so deadly, so destructive as their absolute lack of humour.

But the great white magic of the theatre, where I was now to have a part for many years and which in Germany conjured up beneficent and helpful spirits until the very moment of its annihilation, possessed a fertile core for its productive achievement—a consciousness of the central importance of humanity, a desire for subjective truth based on experience, on all-embracing, creative love. And if this magic can accomplish nothing else except to make people laugh or weep—laugh at themselves or weep for others, for the fate of strangers, for Hecuba—even that is a lasting stream of power and



warmth, perception, and trust, pouring through their hearts and heads.

## § 6

My next play after *The Jolly Vineyard* I worked on for a year and a half. I realized that this step, the first one after a success, was a most difficult one to take. I succeeded. Again the material was taken from folk life, but this time it was tragic. On the opening night I saw people weep as they had laughed over *The Jolly Vineyard*. Yet all these were to me attempts, beginnings, not perfected achievements. I now had all the necessary tools in my hands, all materials, time, independence, the whole apparatus of the theatre, the best actors. I was successful with a series of plays which I looked upon as rungs in a ladder leading me to some future work. When in 1930 the Nazi tidal wave rapidly swept over Germany with such unforeseen violence I used a well-known episode from the pre-war period on which to hang a politico-human tragic-comedy, *The Captain of Koepenick*, which I called "A German Fairy Tale." It was the story of a poor devil of a vagrant, a man without a passport or right of domicile (I little dreamed how actual that situation was to become a few years later for me and an untold number of others!), who suddenly hit on the idea of getting into a captain's second-hand uniform and then, by using a few military commands, making a dupe of a whole town—nay, even of almost all Germany. It was a warning, and in the programme I quoted the phrase which Sir Walter Raleigh put at the head of his *Historie of the World*, "To paint the past, denote the present, prepare the future." The play, brilliantly produced at the Deutsches Theater, was as much of a success as *The Jolly Vineyard* before it—this despite the Nazis and the tendencies of the times. Once more I had the good fortune to gather to-



gether the best and widest circles of the people whose language I speak into an elated, inspirited, and thoughtful audience.

Then in 1933 my plays were banned from the German theatres, and several years later my books also were forbidden. There was still Austria. Then German-speaking Switzerland. And then?

The way into the World.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *A Moment Lived in Paradise*

IT is raining in Vermont, perhaps also in Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New York. It is the cool, steady rain of late summer, and when I close my eyes I can hear it gently rustle as it falls on the grass outside my window. It is a fluttering rustle, like that of a woman in a long silk dress walking barefoot across a room. It has the same tone as our rain at home in Salzburg, when it fell on the meadows outside my window. For when I close my eyes, even for a second, and think myself 'back home' it is not the Rhine I see nor the vineyards nor even the old Cathedral Square in Mainz—it is the house in Austria, the Meadow Mill, the village there, the woods, and the burying-ground. Home is not where a man is born, but where he wants to die, where he wants to carry out his life and bring it to a close, as it is ordained. It is where he has put his own roots down into the earth which he has broken by his own toil.

The only lasting kind of earthly happiness lies in the consciousness of productivity. That is why fruitful work is no curse but a blessing. That is why you cannot picture a paradise as a place where fruits drop in your mouth (how infernally boring that would be in the long run!), but as one where you sow and you reap. Our life in Austria *was* that paradise. And now it no longer makes any difference whether it lasted twelve and a half years or only long enough to shut our eyes and open them again. To have lived fully that one moment cannot be paid for too dearly by anything in the world. And until such time as death will come it is natural that you should keep



on hoping that there may still be a few more good moments in store.

When I, after the success of *The Jolly Vineyard*, had paid all my debts and all my friends had attended to their cash needs I found, to my astonishment, that I still had money, more even than I could carry about in my pockets. But the Austrian poet Billinger, a great friend of mine at that time, did not have any. So I invited him to spend the spring with us on an island in the Baltic, where we had rented a little cottage among the dunes. During a stormy night, with a cold sea breeze roaring, and having warmed ourselves with innumerable hot toddies, Billinger told us about a solitary mill in Henndorf, near Salzburg, which, as he happened to know, stood empty and for sale through the agency of the heir and owner of the famous Henndorf Kaspar-Moser Braeu, one of the oldest and best inns in Austria. Billinger described the mill and its surroundings in terms so lyric, so enchanting, so like a fairy-tale, that no one could ever have recognized it. And all his exact statements as to situation, size, and condition were totally false. But we were tremendously excited about it, and the longer he spoke the more alluring it seemed to be. My wife came from Austria, and it drew me too away from the sea into the farmlands, into the mountains.

After a few more toddies Billinger was able to tell us the price; it was, of course, all wrong, but the whole matter appeared to me to be settled. In the middle of the night we sent off a telegram to the innkeeper which read, "I am buying mill. Please send agreement immediately." The next day I received a wire in answer, "Would urgently advise first seeing the mill." When looked at in the light of day and without the toddies this seemed much more reasonable, so we left the Baltic immediately and went to the Alps.



The proprietor of the inn, Herr Karl Mayr, received us in the shade of the great chestnut-trees in his garden. He looked like some nobleman of the eighteenth century. He wore a native costume in a graceful stylized design of his own, and he had a charm, culture, and bearing such as you might expect to find in an archduke. His ancestors, a dynasty of hotel-keepers and brewers, had amassed wealth, but had remained loyal to their hereditary craft. He was the most original and unusual host I had ever seen; he painted, he was a musician, he designed the most engaging costumes, which were highly sought after by the foreigners in Salzburg, and he conducted his inn with a sort of artistic intuition and yet with completely enchanting naturalness. While there you really felt yourself a guest; that is to say, if he liked you. Guests for whom he did not care, or who behaved badly, he was quick to request to leave at once. They did not even have to pay their bills.

So it was not at all sure whether we should be allowed to buy the Meadow Mill and become his neighbours; it was not so much a question of how pleased we were as whether or not we pleased him. We spent the first evening in the panelled tap-room of the inn, which had stood there on the highway for some thousand years. It had burned down several times and been rebuilt, and with its powerful thick walls and generous rooms it had the character of an old castle. It even had a 'haunted' room—in Henndorf they believed in that—and a kitchen such as you would find it difficult to duplicate anywhere in the world.

In the course of the evening the peasants sat down, with their jugs of beer or wine and their pipes, at the heavy wooden tables. Our host called each one by his first name and knew so many stories about the village and its inhabitants that we felt ourselves at home in no time. Suddenly we heard the tones of a zither out in the vaulted hall, and a stout man, who was sitting



among the peasants and appeared in every way to be one of them, began to sing native songs in a marvellous bass, and the others then joined in. He was the brother of the proprietor and joint owner of the inn, the famous court singer Richard Mayr, first *basso* of the Vienna State Opera House and one of the great artists of all Europe. (His picture, a souvenir of his season at the Metropolitan, hangs in the Blue Ribbon Restaurant in New York at the corner of Forty-fourth Street and Broadway.)

The hours passed, the evening deepened, and about midnight our host was of the opinion that the time was right to look at the mill. With lighted lanterns we set out; the house lay in absolute silence, only the brook babbled and sang, and the fountain in the courtyard splashed. No one had lived there for twenty years. In the upper rooms there were still some gorgeous peasant wardrobes and built-in beds, all gaily painted, which had belonged to the former millers, but downstairs the big living-room was quite empty and bare; grass was growing in the entry, even between the floor-boards. There was no light in the house, so we hung our lanterns on the built-in tile stove and sat down on the bench running along it. We had brought wine with us; the jug was passed round, and it grew more and more homelike in the empty room with its flickering candle-light. Soon our imagination, guided and fired by the expert suggestions of our host, brought the spaces to life, filled them with tables, chairs, furniture, utensils. "The sideboard must go there! The dining-table there! An old grandfather's clock would look well on that wall, perhaps a big one with a painted face such as you find in peasant cottages. And a wall-rack with jugs and lots of pewter plates, and for an overhead light an iron cartwheel or a wooden, painted yoke, fitted for electricity instead of candles, and such and such tablecloths and curtains, such and such dishes. . . ."



Exactly as we imagined it that night, amid dust and cobwebs, did it really look a few weeks later.

## § 2

We always spent the greater part of the year there. The children grew up there; they played with the peasant children, and, when they were big enough, they went to the village school. To the natives we were "the Meadow Millers"—every one was named after his house—and in all the years I was there many people never knew what my real name was. Nor did they have any curiosity about the customs of the world 'outside,' beyond the limits of the village, as to whether one had a name or wrote plays or just planted cabbages. With them you discussed wind and weather, hay and cattle, everyday cares. You went yourself to get fish from the lake fisherman, who had a solitary house in a clearing in the woods, or the fragrant black bread fresh from the oven; you took part in the weddings, christenings, funerals; you drank and danced with the villagers at their festivals; you learned their customs and their songs. At Christmas the peasant children came to our living-room where a tree I had cut down myself stood in one corner, together with a Christmas cradle made with wooden figures, and there they gave a Nativity play interspersed with local songs which Mozart may have heard as a child. Sometimes there were as many as thirty performers, children between the ages of four and fifteen, whom my wife had to coach and train like so many half-broken colts.

Then there were presents, especially for the poorer guests, and at midnight we took our lanterns and tramped through the hard, frozen snow to Christmas Mass in the brightly lighted church. The village band played loudly, out of tune, solemnly. The falsetto soprano of the schoolmistress struggled for supre-



macy over the church choir and sometimes in quite a different key; a damp mist emanated from heavy boots and overcoats, and it was all as beautiful, solemn, and joyous as it possibly could be.

There were three organizations in the village, each of which carried a banner in holiday processions; there were the firemen, the Rifle Brigade, who made an ungodly racket with their old brassbound blunderbusses on all Church and country feast days, and the Returned Soldiers, the survivors of the last war, who each year on the anniversary of the outbreak of war drank themselves roaring drunk, for, so they reasoned, if the war had not broken out they could not have survived it. These people hated to let slip by any occasion for a celebration, and their temperament was light, gay, and lilting.

They were happy, industrious, inquisitive, and, above all, gifted. When our young gardener made a rock garden down by the brook or the carpenter built a fence it was all done with a style and with a kind of artistic swing. In this region, where every barn-door and every ridge-pole was a reminder of the form-loving period of high Baroque, there still survived a perception of, and love for, genuine craftsmanship. The peasant women took great joy in the flower-boxes at their windows, and their kitchens gleamed with copper and pewter. Even filthy old Lena, the eighty-year-old and still man-crazy village idiot, hung beautiful coloured necklaces and chains of silver coins round her neck, and when she shuffled through the village streets with her tapping crook and her old brown wrinkled face, mumbling to herself, she looked like the medicine-man of some Indian tribe. The people in this village had distinctly individual, pronounced, wilful faces, such as you find in portraits by medieval painters or the carved wooden figures of Pacher and Riemenschneider.

I have seldom met such a serene, well-balanced, and trust-



worthy character as that of our caretaker, Josef Eder, who with his bright-eyed wife, Frau Justina, helped with the heavy work. By avocation he was the village gravedigger. But familiar association with the dead and with graves had not made him in the least sinister or gruesome, but had rather lent him an unconscious dignity and gentle friendliness. At the same time he was a strong, healthy man who could take a vigorous share in work, in a dance, and also in a brawl. The attitude towards death among these Catholic peasants was very simple and natural: it was part of the process of life, the way of the world, the seasons of the earth, the change of the generations. Their concept of immortality robbed it of any gloomy horror. They respected death, deplored it, and paid it the tribute of a solemn ritual, but they did not shrink from it or fear it, and even the children were accustomed to the sight of bodies peacefully laid out on a bier, to whom the last respects were paid. That was also the attitude of our domestic gravedigger to his occupation—completely unsentimental but in no wise brutal or heartless. In the village they called him, with jocose matter-of-courseness, the Dodey, which meant “Little Death,” and that was also his wife’s nickname for him. “Oh, Lord Jesus!” he exclaimed when he was digging a new manure trench for us, and we wondered at its long, narrow shape. “There, I’ve gone and made a grave out of it! It’s just a habit. . . .” Or when some crazy old creature would hobble by he would say softly and good-naturedly to himself, “I’ll soon put you under the sod.” It sounded tremendously reassuring. Joking or serious, in repose or at work, his strong, simple face, with its reddish moustache, and his powerful figure were always as easy and relaxed as they were alert and cheerful. With their stark features and their peasant appearance both Josef and Justina gave the impression of beauty; you enjoyed looking at them because they were natural, proud, and sure of themselves.



The longer one lived among them the more close one grew to the people and the land, and there were no differences, no discords. Then one night in the summer of 1934 the village was roused out of its sleep by a dull explosion which shook the window-panes even in our house; it was not a thunderstorm or a landslide but the first bomb, the first blowing up of a bridge by the Nazis. The majority of the inhabitants were honestly outraged and indignant over it, and many joined in the search for the criminals, for among the real peasants the hatred propaganda had found no soil in which to grow. At most those affected by it were the middle-class villagers who wanted to be more than they were, the shopkeepers, the dealers, the petty officials. Naturally it was known just what each person was. The structure and development of the whole land were reflected in the small community of a village and in its agrarian life. The people in these parts were neither rich nor very poor, there were no estates, but there was a high average of well-to-do farmers on a small scale, who owned their land and kept a couple of hired men. Anyone who wanted to work could make a living.

There were very few who felt exasperated, disgruntled, jealous, and yet those were the only ones among whom adherents could be found for the Movement for Freedom. There was the dairy-owner, an ambitious youngster with a narrow forehead, who was angry because he was not considered a 'regular' manufacturer or industrialist and hated every one who was superior to him in education, standing, or upbringing. There was a peasant who was jealous of his brother-in-law, the mayor of the village, and dreamed of supplanting him. There was the inspector of the swimming-pool, the second son of a landowning peasant, who was enraged because he was not his father's principal heir. He was not inclined to do any ordinary work, and he was drunk every other night. He lost his post



at the swimming-pool because of his unreliability; then he was locked up for having cashed his soldier's pension twice over, and after that he was heart and soul for the Movement—which he advocated largely over his beer. Those were the Nazis, and their followers were half-grown youths egged on by them.

But those who were loved and respected like the Mayrs, like our caretaker, like most of the people, remained uncorrupted to the end. They clung more and more closely to their priest, a small, physically insignificant, courageous man who thundered every Sunday from his pulpit against the "new heathens" and who paid no attention when some young rascals broke his window-panes. He dreamed of the day when the Babylonian tower outside would crash and of a Christian Socialism.

In the period which followed that first blowing up of the bridge and consequent destruction of the big State highway Willy, the miller's son who worked as gardener for us and the Mayrs, grew paler, more agitated and restless. Willy was a magnificent youth, slender, tall, with a lithe, supple gait. He did his work skilfully and with so much imagination that it was a joy to watch him. In the days after the abortive Putsch, when Chancellor Dollfuss was murdered, he was so upset and depressed that he could not look anyone in the eye. Then one morning the police came to take him away as the principal culprit in the blowing up of the bridge. Now his life was at stake, because crimes involving explosives, according to martial law, called for the death penalty. We were all worried about him, even though he was a Nazi. Why was he a Nazi? It was comparatively simple. His *fiancée* worked for the dairyman mentioned above, who had several dozen employees. This dairyman was the local *führer*, and those who were under his jurisdiction, together with all their dependants, were obliged, whether they liked it or not, to take his orders. That was how it had started.



And our Willy, who had a fantastic streak in him anyway, was perhaps excited and fascinated by the adventurous, 'forbidden' revolutionary quality of this illegal conspiracy. They stuffed such youngsters' heads full of what heroes, martyrs, and national benefactors they were. They also slipped a few threats in: if you did not join up you might later on have reason to regret it. At first it was just a game. It was fun to set a flaming swastika high on a mountain-side and then to hide in a treetop while you watched the constable hunting for footprints. Then all at once there was no way back. One day came "the Order." It came from near-by Berchtesgaden. Our dairyman had a secret wireless station on his milk farm, operated by a German expert. The money, too, came from Germany, and everything was directed from there. Whoever dared refuse to carry out such an order was a traitor and subject to the Feme, the secret tribunal.

During the time when Willy was waiting to be sentenced, believing every hour that he would inevitably be executed, I received a letter from him in which he enclosed a little drawing of a plan of our garden. Shortly before he was arrested he had laid out an underground water system, and no one except him knew where it had to be turned on and off. This left him no peace of mind because, should he have to die, we could not have regulated our water-supply and should have suffered quite a loss. (What would he have done had the "Order" from Berchtesgaden required the blowing up of the whole house, including the water system?) But he did not have to die. His sentence was commuted to a long term in prison; I was thoroughly happy over this and often sent him books to prison. Later on, after I myself had been obliged to leave Austria, I heard that during the time of the annexation, when he was released, he threatened some rowdies who were bent on looting my house with his pistol and chased them away from the door-steps. But that was too late. Loyalty had lost its point, and



what he had forbidden to the looters was accomplished by the Gestapo.

I can truly say that I did not suffer a single disappointment in these people with whom we lived, the real folk. They all behaved just as you would have expected them to do. Our former cook expressed this succinctly in a report sent to us abroad, "The people who were horrid before are more horrid now, and those who were decent have become even more so."

### § 3

But when we celebrated the great feast that country community, which is at bottom indestructible, was still in full bloom. It was only half a year before the evil star had begun to rise over Germany, and it was the seventh summer which I had spent in Henndorf, or, to be exact, it was Our Lady's Day, which is the 15th of August, 1932.

For years the Rifle Brigade, the oldest organization in the village, whose president, moreover, was our gravedigging caretaker, had pestered me to give them a new banner. Their century-old one, for all its dignity, was slowly going to shreds. They put to me various tempting considerations should I decide to make the acquisition of a new banner possible, as, for instance, a triple salvo in my honour—over my grave. But I knew these peasants and realized that you must not give in to them too quickly, especially in material things, if you do not want to lose their respect and be classed as a fool and a spendthrift in their eyes. But now, as a kind of sacrificial offering for my seven happy years in the place, I decided to say yes. Their rejoicing was indescribable. The banner was ordered at the best flagmaker's in Vienna. It was to be embroidered by hand—red and white, the national colours—to be made of heavy silk, bordered in gold and ornamented with a picture of



the landscape in the centre. But the main thing was the festival itself, to which for months the whole village had been looking forward with joy, until the anticipation rose to fever heat in the last weeks. There were endless and complicated palavers connected with the preparations. Everything was thought of: the invitations to near-by communities, the decorating of the village, the illumination, the church ceremony, the procession, the food, and the drink. It was to last three days and three nights.

This festival, said the Henndorfers, would be talked of for thirty years. And that is how it would have been if in the meantime so much other, less pleasant material for conversation had not emerged. On the eve of the festival there was not a single house anywhere in the neighbourhood not completely decorated with flowers, garlands of greens, and lights. For days the horses which were to haul the holiday coaches had been curry-combed; their manes and tails were marvellously braided with red and white silk ribbons. And in our house too there reigned a sense of festive excitement. All the windows and doors were open, the warm summer air streamed in; even the passageway to the kitchen was wide open, and our living-room was converted into a rustic land of plenty. Everywhere, on the heavy wooden tables, in the embrasures of the windows, on the sideboard, all kinds of country delicacies were spread about. Here was a whole ham, freshly cut; here a huge cheese; ropes of sausages hung from the beams overhead. The pieces of butter on the dishes were large and as long as loaves, and powerful round discs of black bread reposed on flat wooden plates. Our Dodey meted out beer ceaselessly from the barrel that stood in the court by the front door. His red moustache dripped with foam, for he felt it his duty to taste the beer before serving it to the guests. A small cask of native Tyrolean red wine—to be genuine it must have an almost light brown shade



—was set up in the parlour, and for those who needed a quick rescue there was the home-made plum brandy, the 'slivovitz,' standing ready in large stone jugs. We had sixteen guests in the house at the time and more kept coming, because it was festival time in Salzburg and the place was swarming with friends and acquaintances. Some of them stayed with us, although where they were stowed is a mystery to this day. Most of the ladies, especially the young and pretty ones, had dressed themselves in native costumes and were hardly to be distinguished from the local inhabitants, for the whole village was decked with ornaments in the old tradition.

Our guests were a colourful jumble of contrasts, yet they possessed a kind of homogeneity and common harmony. Companions of our dream—where are you now? There was Chaliapin, the great Russian singer, with his wife, his friend, and his charming daughters, Dasya and corn-blond Marina—a whole Russian village! There was a Hollander millionaire who had established a valuable music library in Vienna. There was the head of a peasant theatre in Upper Bavaria, with his short leather trousers and his Punchinello face. There was my great friend Petrus, the Catholic prelate, who had come all the way from Germany to conduct the out-of-door Mass, with his flaming white hair, his intense, smouldering eyes, and his beautiful face beaming with life-loving joy. And then there were some ladies and gentlemen from castles in the neighbourhood of Salzburg, several writers and artists, together with their wives, daughters, or sweethearts.

But the principal actors were the peasants, and the whole content and import of the festival was the village. Day and night you could hear singing in the inns, the stamping of the dancers, the blaring of music. And the children also took part—for a week the hair of the little girls had been in a state of preparation with sugared water and lard and done up in curl-



papers at night. This was to beautify them for the traditional dance they had learned from the village schoolmaster in honour of the Banner Mother, as my wife was called because we were the donors of the flag. But when, on the eve of the festival, a long procession of them in their heavily starched white dresses marched into our courtyard to begin the performance the inevitable thunderstorm broke in the middle of the very first measure played by the flutes. At the first claps of thunder the ballet fluttered away like a covey of frightened partridges. This sight was undoubtedly much more entertaining to our guests, who were hanging out of all the windows, than the historical round dance would have been. A thunderstorm is as much a part of a country festival as salt is of soup.

The great torchlight procession by night also took place amid thunder and lightning, and the rain pelted down on our hair as we stood bareheaded for five minutes before the war memorial monument to honour the dead. But then the dazzling moonlight broke through and quickly dissipated the clouds. It smelled deliciously of foliage, of damp earth, and not another cloud showed its face for the rest of the festival.

What peasants can stand at a festival like that is hardly believable, and we all did our utmost to keep up with them. But after going to bed at three o'clock there were only a few who got up with me at four, when the brass band appeared at our house to play us a morning serenade. At six began the procession of associated organizations; they had come over from thirty-two other Austrian communities to honour the new banner of Henndorf. They filed through the village street with their banners and bands, they boomed and blared until the horses reared. In front of the coach of honour, in which we were being driven to the open-air Mass and the solemn consecration of the banner, they had harnessed two young stallions, the handsomest in the village, and we could well thank our



lucky stars that we escaped alive. The Mass was held in a large open meadow, hedged round with trees. My friend Petrus sang the Latin text with the Italian accent he had acquired from the Jesuits in Rome. My wife, flanked by two powerful peasant women who had donated two streamers for the banner—one for weddings and a black one for funeral processions—had to recite a verse, and she suffered more from stage fright than she ever had in the theatre. All the thirty-two visiting banners were dipped, and ‘kissed’ the new, freshly consecrated one in greeting. From thenceforward it was to be carried and flourished amid the people on all occasions, sad or gay; it was to bring joy to them with its bright folds and instil in them a simple and strong sense of solidarity, the consciousness of mutual trust and mutual help. It was to serve as a reminder that they were not merely self-seeking, petty human beings, but that above them the heavens and under their feet the solid earth of the peasants were common to them all, so that each one stood for every other one, because in this world each one needs every other one. That was the gist of my friend Petrus’s address, which towards the end gained considerable speed because he had been obliged to remain sober since midnight.

I too had a speech to make, but not as long as the atmosphere was one of solemnity. It came later in the inn, when the gold crust on the roast pork glinted like amber and no one long stayed thirsty. “You countrymen,” was what I said, “have nagged me for seven years to present a banner, and yet if I had given it to you even one year sooner you would have run me down and said, ‘He’s rushing things.’ For that is what you are like, you farmers. But now you have your flag, for we know each other well enough, and things have gone well with me. I have lived better and more gladly here than anywhere else in the world. And that is why I am happy to be able to give you something that you like and which will remain here longer



than we shall. Now we must all stay together as long as we can, and whoever goes under the table first will have to contribute the next banner. Your health!"

We really did stay together, for the whole affair lasted from Saturday evening until late into Monday night. Some tens of thousands of litres of beer and wine were drawn, and not a single person, no matter how poor, went away hungry. Music played, we were all photographed together, and no one left the celebration unless it was to go out under the trees to kiss a girl. Dancing went on without a break. The proprietress of a farm, with whom I had to struggle through the motions of a dance of honour, weighed eighteen stone and sweated like a horse. But the beautiful women and girls, when they were dancing, laid their heads to one side and half closed their eyes.

On the third evening, during an intermission for coffee which was being served at our house, a boy arrived, breathless from the run, with a message that the music had broken down. This did not signify any tragic occurrence other than that they had simply fallen asleep over their beer jugs and trombones. But every one wanted to go on dancing, so I sent word to the musicians that there was cold water in the brooks, in case they had forgotten it, and black coffee in the kitchens of the inn. An hour later another messenger appeared with a beaming face and announced, "They are playing again!" So we all went back to the village.

About midnight the leader of the local band fell off his platform stiff as a ramrod, and was carried home by the Rifle Brigade to the tune of solemn chants. Every one now was either too tired or too full to dance; the lights were burning out. Suddenly everything was quiet in the village, and the full moon shone bright over the meadows, scattering silver into the eddying waters of the brooks. We and our guests were still wide awake and gay, regular night-hawks, and because of the



unusual mood induced by the festival we were in a state of enchantment and overwakefulness. We stood out on the broad village street in front of the inn and helped the staggering theatre manager, who had mislaid his key, to climb up to the window of his room, from which he kept tumbling down again. Then suddenly we heard some remarkable tones through the night air, a chirping and trilling like that of strange locusts or birds, and all at once two shadows loomed on the bright and deserted highway, where at this midnight hour no wagons were to be seen. It was two wandering musicians. The one was blowing an antique clarinet and the other had a fiddle tucked under his chin. In the days of Eichendorff or Schubert they would not have strolled along any differently than on this night.

In Frankenmark, fifty miles away, they had heard there was a festival in progress here, so they started out on foot to see if they could garner in a few pennies. Now they were bitterly disappointed to have come too late. But they came just at the right time for us. I showed them the way, and they preceded us, playing. The whole party naturally fell into a procession, a kind of polonaise of our guests, and so with music we wandered back to the mill, to our home. In the village a few who had succumbed too early to drink woke up and joined us. As we passed over the dark bridge across the brook and reached our property the musicians seated themselves on a bench in front of the house, and of their own accord struck up a Strauss waltz. And then, since the meadow lay there in the moonlight like a floor of smoothly scoured planks, we all began to dance on the green. The dew made our shoes wet, the grass tickled the ladies' ankles, but we danced on and played and sang until the steaming mists of early morning rose and a bright dawn broke. Then we sat down in the first rays of sunlight, wreathed in reveries and rapture, to our cups of coffee.



The musicians were stowed away in the hayloft, where they slept soundly and well until the local constable roused them with a warrant of arrest because of having broken the peace during the night and performed without a permit. He did this, naturally, only because they were outsiders. The poor fellows came to me and said they would either have to pay a fine of twelve shillings, which would ruin them, or go to gaol for three days. Of course I gave them the twelve shillings. The elder of the two weighed the money in his hand for a long time, thanked me most politely, and then as he pocketed it he said, "I hope you won't mind if we keep the money and go to gaol after all. . . ."

I heard them still playing as they went down the road with the constable.



## EPILOGUE

### *Second Wind*

WHEN a man is travelling constantly or when he has no fixed home it can easily happen that, awaking in his bed at night, it is impossible for him to picture the room which surrounds him in the dark, that he feels only thin air where he believed the wall to be, that he can find no lamp, and that it takes him a long time to recall where the doorway is through which he entered the room, or the chair on which he laid his clothes, or the table, the window. For involuntarily there come to his mind the numberless rooms in which he has slept and wakened, and he fills them with the furniture of his memory, with the images of his fantasy. It seems to him as though he could conjure up into this shapeless dark every single room in which he had ever opened his eyes, all the way back to that forgotten room, swallowed up in the deep past, where his cradle stood, and he feels at once a sense of great power and great helplessness. For even if he can switch on a light now and know he is surrounded by four solid walls the dark is still outside the window, around the house, and the part of it that he can penetrate does not extend much beyond the wavering circle thrown by a pocket torch when on a walk through the woods at night.

And so it seems senseless to describe a piece of a road the beginning and end of which you do not know. Autobiography, contemporary history—they are in themselves contradictions and can never be anything but fragments. We can do no more than feel the living present and perceive it as it is mirrored in our own eyes. The stream of time, in which our lives are but ripples, the ages which mould and shape our destinies are



deeper and wider than what we call history. Man makes history and is in turn made by history and its compulsions. But the courses of time are like slow-moving, grinding glaciers, like waves of light in cosmic space and the cooling of earth's fiery core, like the endless settling and clustering of tiny shells on the floor of the sea, out of which mountain ranges and whole continents are formed, like the drifting and roving of clouds, like the exquisite graining in wood and the intricate tracery of a bark beetle. Both things are true: there is no hazard in the whole, and there are nothing but hazards in the individual element, and out of it the chain of life is forged. And of all that we do or know or experience one thing alone remains as a goal and as a beacon: character.

There is much from which we had to part in the Old World. People, things, graves. Many died whom we did not believe we could spare, and of many of them we now can say they were fortunate to have died at the right time. Old Elias had to go in the fullness of his activity; he did not have to live to see the destruction of his world. Standing at his grave, I promised that we would fulfil the hopes he placed in us, although God knows whether it is possible to do so. Young Mutzi Gropius was carried off, in her seventeenth year, by a malignant disease which first paralysed her; she had promised me to get well, but was not allowed to keep her word. I sat by her bedside the day before it happened—her heart was full of life, and she was beautiful, wise, fully rounded. Many others, too, have had to go, but left behind to us the image of their personalities, like so many helping angels. Perhaps that was why the most difficult thing to bear, in going away from Europe, was parting from those graves. The old earth shelters so much of all from which we sprang and to which we are more deeply bound than to our evanescent day.



When we left Austria I still did not want to leave the Continent, as though we could still save or defend what in reality had already perished, in so much as it could perish. What is imperishable, however, is not tied to place. And when the thunderbolt fell which annihilated my friend Oedoen I suddenly knew that there was no standing still and no return. The death of the young poet Oedoen von Horváth—he came from Hungary, but his language was German—had nothing to do with politics, exile, current events, but to us it had the effect of a sign and a fearful warning. It was shortly after the end of Austria, where he spent that last year with us in Henndorf and had written his best book, and we went through the night of the fall of Austria together in Vienna. Just then he had been temporarily in Amsterdam to discuss some matters with his publisher, and from there he intended to come to visit us in Switzerland. I expected him for Whitsuntide by the Lake of Geneva, where we were then living. Three days earlier came the news that he had been killed in a thunderstorm in Paris. A falling tree, a gigantic old elm, had killed him on the Champs-Élysées. It was an accident such as may happen once in a hundred years. Originally he had not intended to go to Paris at all, but was coming straight from Holland to Switzerland. But in Amsterdam he went to a clairvoyant who was very much in fashion and to whom every one was running. No doubt he visited him only out of general interest, for toying with unknown and unplumbed currents and forces always was the strongest kind of a stimulant for his imagination, but he did not go to him for advice. The clairvoyant told him immediately and with unbreakable stubbornness that he must leave for Paris now. Something awaited him there, something he could not escape and which might perhaps be the most significant event of his life. The clairvoyant could not say, could not grasp, what it was; he could only feel that it was a question of something



especially decisive. It was surely not superstition which influenced my friend really to go to Paris. It happened to fit in well with his plans. He was in no hurry, and he was anxious to see some friends who were living there. Also a vague negotiation with a film company was in the air. The clairvoyant may therefore have given him a good hint or at least a suggestion, and after all, you never can tell—perhaps something of decisive importance might really be awaiting him there.

Stranger than this is what his friends tell of that last day with him, of his conversation, and how he felt himself driven restlessly for hours through the city until his fate overtook him at the Rond-Point of the Champs-Élysées. I am not going to assert that there was more in this than a chain of circumstances. I do not know. But his early death—he was only thirty-six and clearly at the beginning of his unfolding—was a deep shock to us.

I went to Paris, at his parents' request, to say some words of farewell at his grave. And his funeral gave me the first inner impetus towards leaving Europe. It started from the ambulance station, where he had been taken, to a church where the requiem mass was sung, and thence to the Père Lachaise Cemetery. And all the writers and artists in exile in Paris went. It was a ghostly, desperate train. There were many fine, significant, outstanding heads and minds, many of them no longer among the living to-day, and yet as a whole it was a sight of shuddering hopelessness. Blasted intellects, outcast characters, splintered talents, and behind them no power, no really unifying idea, no tangible, concrete will—nay, not even a common faith. What bound us together was only our common fate, our common knowledge of threatened and even lost values.

“We, the last defenders of European culture . . .” said one of the orators at the graveside, and I could not restrain myself



from whispering, "Poor culture." I had to think of the Russians in Berlin, of how they sat in the cafés on the Nürnbergerstrasse and dreamed of their return to Petrograd and Moscow. This was not the same, but it was equally hopeless. What bound us banished will-o'-the-wisps together here was too small, too weak, to gather itself together and rise. We must not look back or cling to what was past and gone. Never before had it been borne in on me with such pitiless and conclusive force, and therefore it had become so convincingly and fortifyingly clear that *we had to begin again from the beginning*—all of us without exception. It was not a question of a disturbance, of danger, of reshaping something, but of a complete change, the fresh creation, the transformation of the world; and we too must transform ourselves if we wish to take part in and help to build it. No, no more complaints, no more bemoaning our fate, no more helpless accusations and half-turns backward.

At the open grave of this dead young man, who I knew had felt as I did and would have gone along with me, I determined to leave behind me the graves of the old earth. The experiences, the external development of things as they unrolled in the following months, what we lived through in London and Paris, strengthened this conviction: if we still believed in the salvation of our world, then we must now leave Europe. For they were no longer fighting there with the only weapons left to us who had been cast out.

When on one evening, shortly before we sailed away, we had drunk some bottles of claret and then gone out to sit on the balustrade of a bridge across the Seine and had looked into the water, across to the lights on the other bank, we felt once more the whole forceful impact, the finality of our farewell. We were not sure whether war would come, and yet we knew it would, and we felt the whirr and claws of annihilation



swooping down on all that we loved so deeply and so ardently: down on sweet France, pulsing with Burgundy blood and fragrant with the womanly tenderness, down on the hallowed abode of beauty and spirit, the towers of cathedrals, and everything which in the course of thousands of years has grown into existence. But we wanted to take the small flame of hope, sheltered in our hands, across the sea and let a new wind fan it.

What awaits the fugitive beyond the sea is called America, but to him it is still the New World. By that is meant the only world where men can begin life afresh, because it itself, with its few centuries of growth and its tremendous, inexhaustible soil for its roots, is yet in a state of beginning, hoping, unfolding. You cannot become a Frenchman if you were a German. You cannot simply change front. And you must be born an Englishman, for that is something you cannot learn. In all those lands one is at most a guest. But Americans are made by destiny. Nothing falls into their laps, and they are not born with things; their whole history is that of a continuous manly mastery over destiny. What did we know of America over there? I myself had no notion of its realities, let alone of its geography. I believed that Vermont was in the Rocky Mountains, that the State of Washington surrounded the White House, and that Oregon was on the Mississippi. Even literature, as a rule, can transmit only fragments and no real conception. But the idea of America in a broad sense, which I carried with me, I owed to the vision of a poet whose prophetic power overwhelms me more and more: Walt Whitman. I have read his poems often in the magnificent German translation of Hans Reisiger, but now I find these words in the preface of his *Leaves of Grass*, in which he describes America as the natural home of a poet: "The United States



themselves are essentially the greatest poem. Here is the hospitality which for ever indicates heroes."

Lines like those embrace an immortal confession of faith, and we uncover the history of America, with all its granite and its greatheartedness, as a new, unknown saga. To understand this seems to me much more significant and important for a newborn immigrant than the attempt all too quickly to form a judgment of existing conditions. We should not be overhasty. We have time. We must take one step at a time, as one does in new, unexplored territory, moving ahead with vigour, prudently but with determination. Then we shall begin to feel by ourselves that exile is not a flight and a curse, but a destiny. And a man must love his destiny. The emigration of our days can no longer be envisaged as a series of personal disasters. It is truly much more of a new migration of peoples, and it is especially in the intellectual field that it will lead to a penetration and smelting of forces and values, which in the long run is bound to be fertile and creative in results. Who knows but that its hidden purpose is to bring forth a new mankind, a new world community, a new race of men in which the old immovable contradictions will be dissolved and overcome.

This migration knows no limits, high or low. On the move are children and kings, stammering beginners and the mature, great minds and spirits, Romain Rolland, Maeterlinck, explorers, inventors and nursing mothers and young lovers. It does not halt for class or honour or respect; one can imagine Goethe as a professor at Princeton or Beethoven giving music lessons in Boston. Exile is no longer something which we should bemoan. We have to accept it and go through with it.

If the rights of man are to be proclaimed anew, then the first and the supreme thesis to be stated is the right to dream.

America, the land of practical activity, has always been, from its very discovery to the time when it became a people and a



nation, the product of great dreamers. The bold dreams of centuries, the dream image of peoples and generations. The dreams of yesterday are the living reality of to-morrow. We need both dreams and deeds. In the earlier days Europe sent her ne'er-do-well children overseas, and among them were those who were no longer able to adjust themselves to petrified standards and brought with them a flood of imagination, talent, and alert endeavour. They became the pioneers of new states and lands. May not we, the ne'er-do-well sons of our now enslaved peoples, have been chosen to become the pioneers of new forms of life? Proclaimers and forerunners of that new way of life for which alone wars will be waged and which alone is at stake in this tragic hour of the world's history?

The dream of to-day, the deed of to-morrow, is the creation of a new world entity in which the outworn, decayed contradictions of society will be merged and equalized. It must be the creation of a new synthesis between labour and value, between raw material and finished product, between matter and form—or, to go back to the everlasting formula, between nature and spirit.

The idea of putting a girdle round the world, of world union, of world economy, of world administration, in one great community, with all the centuries of inventions which lie behind us, is no longer a vision, a Utopia; it is a self-evident fact, an obvious assumption, which any sensible housekeeping mind can grasp. It is over and beyond this that we must visualize the new high mission of to-day and to-morrow—which is to breathe a new soul, a new vitalizing force into material things, for through that force alone can the “discontent of civilization” and the twilight of its gods, the sense of emptiness and futility which is driving so many young people to despair, be exorcised and transformed.

Yet only living entities, or all that serves life, have souls. A



man-made thing may be admirable and powerful, but it is never great or lasting, because it does not live of itself. Man can make synthetic rubber, but not synthetic life. Everything that lives and breathes is the product of another force, and I do not hesitate to name it as divine. And man is godlike or great only when he perceives life and through his perception masters it. That is why the poets, artists, thinkers, have been called divine, but never the inventors, the technicians, or the generals. We say divine Homer, divine Duse, divine Michelangelo, but not divine Edison, divine Newton, and never, even at the zenith of his glory, divine Napoleon. And those Cæsars and emperors who set themselves among the gods, in whatever age, were the ones to lead their peoples and their empires along the path of ruin.

The adoration of inanimate objects, the Golden Calf, money, technical achievements, is never any more than a substitute for the perception of and high regard for a creative being. But man carries within himself the spark of its spirit, the power of its love. Only animated love can produce real power over things. And even a candle, an oil-lamp, a loom, a pewter pot, was once as much of a technical product as the electric bulb and the tractor, and they became familiar, homelike, animated things because they served the generations of man and were closely related to their creature life. Even a weapon can win a soul when it is being wielded in a good and human cause. But its dynamic power may never be worshipped in its own right.

We all, in what we do and make, belong to an active whole, like voices in a chorus, like instruments in an orchestra. The orchestra, not the marching troops, is the symbol of the future community—the orchestra and not the conveyor belt; the score, the solo voice in conjunction with the whole, and not the mass movement; the orchestra leader, and not the Führer.



Looked at in this way, we see the vision of a synthesis in which freedom of individual personality means as much as its incorporation in the whole, the higher organism. This is the true and only meaning of all revolutions, including that of our times—to restore the natural relationship of man to organic life whenever it has been disturbed or destroyed.

In every significant life this balance has been effected.

Luther expressed it succinctly in his treatise on *The Freedom of a Christian* when he said, "A Christian is a free master over all material things, and a Christian is a ministering servant to all things." Kant formulated it in his *Critique of Practical Reason* when he said, "Freedom and absolute law mutually repel one another." The essence of this must be applied to the tenets and requirements of our time. When we say Capitalism and Socialism we mean "opposites." If we say, "Reciprocal action of free initiative and co-operation for common good," we find the way towards a synthesis which removes or transforms the sterile concept of Capitalism of its own accord. Individualism and collectivism appear to be contradictory. Personality and partnership do not. The danger lies where the ego is locked up within itself instead of radiating. The danger lies in piled-up money, dead possessions, which are barren and poison the atmosphere. The danger is everywhere when the individual part cuts himself off instead of acting in conjunction with the living whole. The danger lies there where the creative Eros dies. Love your world, love things, love your life and derive joy from it, pleasure, fun. Joy, pleasure, fun in their literal, their most sensual interpretation. From these elements ennobled and spiritual thought arises, as vapour out of water. Love your soul above all else, for it is your inalienable part in immortality. Do not be afraid. Death is not your enemy. Your only enemy is a bad conscience. Chase it out! Root it out! Cut off its source of nourishment. And feed all the forces



which carry you out beyond yourself, even curiosity, for that is the root of science; even vanity, for that is the source of beauty. Believe yourself to be beautiful, and you will grow more so. There is no power, no element in human or earthly nature which may not serve beauty, form, perfection. Even the barbaric has its place, its stimulant charm, its reactions in the chemistry of life, in the love of the sexes. But never, anywhere in the world, can it be permitted, tolerated, or bred when it has anything to do with the shaping of human society, the State, law, morality, ethics, and political leadership. The root meaning of politics is nothing more than the harnessing of brute force for the good of the *polis*, the community. That is why the policy of brute force is a senseless, criminal suppression of every political idea and shall perish from the earth.

I do not know much of America, of the conditions and circumstances in that land. One does not come to know a land and a people in one year, and hardly in a decade. But its people have stood before me in a few figures which are more beautiful than anything one could have imagined. They were the people born of the imagination of its artists. I am thinking of the mother in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Of the unforgotten and unforgettable figures in *Our Town*. Of the homely young girl at the sewing-machine in *Pins and Needles*. Of that moment in a film where young Mr Smith in Washington stands gazing up at the statue of Abraham Lincoln and reading his words.

“He had become a man after God’s pattern, and not a machine after man’s pattern,” were words I read in a life of Lincoln.

That is all that any man can strive for—or become.



